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HOUSE
OF
RADAGH



THE HOUSE *of* BONDAGE

By

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

Author of "What is Socialism?" etc.



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1911

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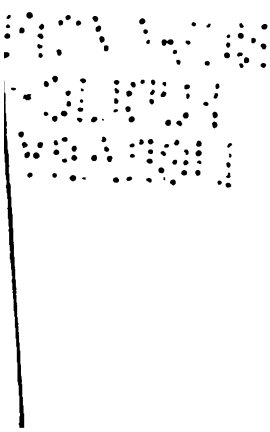
TO

ANDREW JOHN KAUFFMAN

(1840-1899)

"O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practiced that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!"





CAVEAT EMPTOR

THIS story is intended for three classes of readers, and no more. It is intended for those who have to bring up children, for those who have to bring up themselves, and for those who, in order that they may think of bettering the weaker, are, on their own part, strong enough to begin that task by bearing a knowledge of the truth.

For it is the truth only that I have told. Throughout this narrative there is no incident that is not a daily commonplace in the life of the underworld of every large city. If proof were needed, the newspapers have, during the last twelvemonth, proved as much. I have written only what I have myself seen and myself heard, and I set it down for none but those who may profit by it.

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN.

NEW YORK CITY,
16th June, 1910.



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THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE

I

"AS IF THE SPRING WERE ALL YOUR OWN"

THE local weather-prophets—the cape-coated Mennonites and the bearded Amishmen, who came into the town to market—had said, with choral unanimity, that the spring would be brief and sudden, and the summer parching and intense.

Already, though April had but dawned, the pink arbutus had bloomed and withered, and the pale first violets were peeping, purple and fragrant, among the lush grass of the front yards on Second Street. The annual oriole was a full fortnight ahead of his time in opening his summer-house in the hickory-tree on the Southwarks' lawn; and up in the droning study-room of the high-school, where all the windows were wide to the lazy sunlight, Miss England had begun, this week, to direct the thoughts of her dwindling senior-class toward the subjects of their graduation essays.

Swaying with the easy, languid grace of an unstudied young animal, Mary Denbigh, the morning-session ended, turned from the graveled walk before the school-grounds into the little town's chief thoroughfare.



Nobody had ever called her pretty, but her light serge skirt had that day been lengthened to her ankles, and Mary was wholly conscious of the new tokens of her growth. Lithe, strong-limbed and firm-bodied, of peasant stock and peasant vigor, youth and health and the open country air were not factors sufficiently unfamiliar to combine in a charm that would attract admiration in her own community. Only a jaded city-gaze—and a well-trained city-gaze at that—would have seen in the blue eyes, the red mouth, the straight nose, pink cheeks, and abundant russet hair, any promise worthy of fulfillment,—could have detected the flower in the bud; and that such a gaze should, on this day of all days, have been leveled in the girl's direction was, perhaps, only one of those grim jests of a Fate that loves to play upon the harmony between man and nature, and that here observed the coming of a human spring that must be brief and sudden, a human summer parching and intense.

The usual group of idle residents and idling commercial drummers were sitting at the plate-glass window of the hotel as she went by, but the girl did not see them. Passing among objects of long familiarity, she saw, in fact, nothing until, in a side-street, she heard a rapid step behind her, was covered by an approaching shadow and, half-turning, found someone, a stranger, at her side.

"How d'y'do, liddle girl?"

Mary looked up; but she was quite too startled observe anything save that the speaker—she could not have told whether he were man or boy—was dark and rosy, smiling and serious, hat in

and, beyond all speculation, no citizen of her own borough.

"I don't know you," she said.

She flushed quickly, and strode forward. It was, she knew, no uncommon thing for the girls of her acquaintance to be "picked up," as they called the process, by some fellow-townsman that had never been formally presented to them; but the process was, as she also knew, one that lost its propriety when extended to aliens.

The present alien was, nevertheless, not easily to be dismissed. He fell into her gait, and walked facilely beside her.

"I beg your *par*don," he said in the humblest and most unobjectionable tones. "I don't mean to be *rude* to you, honest, I don't. I'm a traveling-man, you see——"

Mary was striding rapidly ahead, her full mouth now drawn firm, her blue eyes fixed on the vanishing-point.

"I don't care what you are," she answered.

"All righd," he pleaded. "All I vant now is a chanc't to ex*blain*. I've chust started out traveling for my fader, who's a big distiller in N'York. I've got to stay in this hole for a vhile, un' I'm not used to the *bees*ness, un' I'm lonesome, un' I only vondered if you vouldn't go vith me to a moving-picture show, or something, this evening."

The best way to deal with such a situation is a way that is easiest for the inexperienced and the unpolished. Mary was both. For the first time since he had begun to walk beside her, she now, coming to a defiant stop, faced her annoyer.

"I don't know you," she repeated. "I've told you that onc't, and you'd better not make me tell you any more still. I live the second door round the coming corner, and my pop is a puddler an' weighs two hundred and ten pounds!"

Again she wheeled and again resumed her homeward march; and this time she walked alone. If she heard, dimly, behind her a confused murmur of response, she did not hesitate to learn whether the words were expressions of further apology or newborn dismay, and when she ran, flushed and panting, up the three wooden steps to the two-story brick house that was her home, though she could not then deny herself one backward glance, that glance revealed to her only an empty corner. The pursuit had ended.

She flung open the light door that was never locked by day, walked down the short, darkened hall, past the curtain of the equally darkened parlor, through the dining-room with its pine table covered by a red cotton cloth, and so into the small, crowded kitchen, where her mother fretted and clattered above the highly polished range.

Mrs. Denbigh was a little Pennsylvania-German woman, whom a stern religion and a long life of hard work had not intellectually enlarged. In spite of the fact that she had borne eight children, of whom Mary was the seventh, her sympathies had failed to broaden, and her equally religious and equally hard-working Welsh husband used often to remark to her, during his one-monthly evening of intoxication, that he was glad indeed she was to have no more progeny, since, somehow or other, she

" seemed to git wuss tempered with every innocent youngling as koom to 'un." Whether this criticism was or was not precise, it is at least true that much drudgery had not improved the weary woman's temper; that the long years before her husband rose to his present wages—years during which his wife had not only kept a house and reared a family, but had also added to the communal income by night-work as a dress-maker—had left her gray and stooped and hatchet-faced; and that, though of a race in which the maternal instinct runs almost to a passion, her patience with her remaining pair of home-biding children was frequently fragile and short.

Just now she looked up, a spoon in one hand and a pan in the other, her forehead damp, as always, with sweat, and her harassed eyes momentarily bright with anger.

" Where on earth have you been, anyways? " she shrilly inquired of Mary.

The girl's face instantly hardened from the excitement of her recent adventure to the sullenness behind which she always took refuge in these more usual domestic crises. What she might have confessed had she come home to a less overworked mother, it is, obviously, vain to conjecture; what she actually did was to lock within her breast the story that had been trembling on her red lips, and what she replied to Mrs. Denbigh's question was an ungracious:

" Been at school. Where d'you think? "

The mother straightened up as far as her long-stooped shoulders would permit.

" Think? " she echoed. " I guess I can guess still

where you was. 'Less you was kep' in, you had ought t' been home five minutes ago, an' nobody's kep' in only five minutes. You've been flirtin' with some idiot of a boy on the street-corner yet—that's about what you've been doin'! "

It was a random shot, and one fired from no previous knowledge, but the girl at once realized that, had any neighbor chanced to see what had actually occurred, this parental construction would appear to have some foundation in fact. The thought was enough to seal the locked gate in her breast.

" That ain't so! " she said, with childish fury. " I come straight home, like I always do. If you want me to help more with the work than I do help, why don't you let me quit school? I don't want to go any more, anyhow."

There are some families in which the passing of the lie is no such uncommon or serious offense, and the Denbigh *ménage* was one of them. It was, therefore, upon the latter portion of Mary's speech that her mother, at this time, seized.

" You'll go to school as long as your pop and me say you must! " she retorted.

" You let our Etta quit when she was in the grammar school," expostulated Mary, with an appeal to the precedent of the successfully married sister, who was now a next-door neighbor. " You let her quit then, and now I'm in the high."

Had Mrs. Denbigh's rejoinder been in accordance with the facts, she would have said that all she wanted to do was to give her daughter as much of an education as was compatible with the proper conduct of the Denbigh domestic economy. But tired

women are no more apt to indulge in analytical exposition than are tired men, and so it chanced that her next speech, accompanied by a gesture that raised the cooking-spoon aloft, was a torrent of words unexpectedly interrupted.

"In the high?" she repeated. "Well, I know where you'll be in one minute, still, if you don't right away——"

She brought the spoon forward with a mighty swoop, but its parabola, in crossing the stove, sent it into violent contact with the pot that held the stew destined for the noon dinner. The pot was balanced on the edge of an aperture in the stove whence the lid had been removed. The vessel fell, and its contents belched upon the burning coals.

Mrs. Denbigh gave one look at the steaming ruin, and then seized the already retreating Mary. The girl's struggles, her cries, the dignity of the newly lengthened skirt, avail nothing. A dozen times the mother's arm descended in stinging castigation, and then she hurried her daughter into the hall.

"You git right back to school!" she ordered. "I don't care if you're a half-hour early—you're mostly late enough. You've spoiled your own dinner and mine and little Sallie's, so you don't git nothin' to eat still till evening. You'll go to school, and you'll keep on goin' till your pop an' me tells you to quit!"

Mary looked at the woman without a word, and then, still without a word, passed through the front door and banged it behind her.

But she did not walk in the direction of the school;

she was not going to school. The rebel-spirit of youth choked her, and turned her feet, almost without will of her own, toward the river.

She crossed the railroad tracks, came to the disused towpath and followed it for a mile beyond the town. Far westward she went, "walking," as she would have said, "her madness down," and, hungry though she now was, she did not rest until at last, as late as three o'clock in the afternoon, she sat on a rock at the point where the Susquehanna curves between the sheer precipice of Chicques on the Lancaster County side and the hooded nose of the high hill they call the Point, upon the other.

The flood of rebellion had ceased, but a steady and enduring stream of resolution remained.

Across the sweep of eddies she saw the nearer hills already shedding the browns and blacks of winter's bared limbs and pine branches for the tenderer green of a gentler season. The cultivated portions of the summits were already rich with coming life. Behind her rolled the Donegal Valley, where the crops were even then germinating. Birds were mating in the sap-wet trees beside the water, and from the flowering seeds there came the subtle, poignant scent of a warm April.

Something—something new and nameless and wonderful—rose in her throat and left her heart hammering an answer to the new world around her. She was glad—glad in spite of all her anger and her hunger; glad that she had not told her mother of the boy—for he must have been a boy—whom she had, after all, so needlessly reprimanded; but glad, above everything else, for some reason, for

some intoxication that she might neither then nor ever after completely understand.

Her cheeks glowed a deeper pink; her blue eyes glistened; she opened her red mouth to the seductive sun and, with a sweep of her firm hands, flung loose her russet hair to the breeze. Looking out at the distant fields, she sprang to her feet again and walked, swaying with the easy, languid grace of an unstudied young animal.

The fields reminded her of the rural prophets. It was evident, she thought, that they were right: this year's was to be a spring brief and sudden, a summer parching and intense.

II

A DEED OF TRUST

MARY DENBIGH could not remember the day when the holy estate of matrimony had not been held up to her by others as the whole destiny of woman and had not presented itself as the natural, the easy, the sole path of escape from filial servitude.

She belonged, as has been intimated, to a race in which motherhood is an instinctive passion and an economic necessity, and she was born into a class in which not to marry is socially shameful and materially precarious. When she was very small, her own dolls were her own children and her playmates' dolls her children-in-law, and, when she grew older, she had always before her the sedulously maintained illusion of emancipation worn by those girls, but a few years her seniors, who had given up the drudgery of childhood, which she hated, for the drudgery of wifehood, which they loftily concealed. A young wife was a superior being, whose condition was not at all to be judged by the known condition of one's mother, and all the other and more intimate relations of marriage remained, to the uninitiate, a charmed mystery. If it seems strange to us that this mystery and this innocence remained to Mary at sixteen, the reflection rests not upon her from

whom the secret kept its secrecy, but upon us to whom the innocence appears remarkable.

From a house that exacted everything and forgave nothing, a narrow house, which she could not see as simply an inevitable result of conditions as wide as the world, the girl looked out to that wonderful house next door where her sister had, only three years before, been taken as a bride. This sister was now an elegant person, who said "fore-head," "of-ten," and "a-gain," but Mary could remember Etta, in gingham frock and apron, performing the tasks that were now enforced upon Mary herself. And she could now observe—as, indeed, her sister's wholly conscious pride well intended that she should observe—Etta in clothes that were beyond the reach of an unmarried daughter of Owen Denbigh; Etta going to dances forbidden to a Denbigh maid. When she climbed reluctantly to bed at ten o'clock, Etta's lights blazed always wide awake, and when she rose in the gray of the morning, Etta's shutters were luxuriously closed.

Every dawn Mary must pack her father's dinner-bucket, as Etta used to pack it, before Owen started for the mill. That done, and the hurried breakfast eaten, she must make her own bed and wash the dishes before she set out for school. At noon there were more dishes, and only every other evening, before sitting down to detested study by the kerosene lamp in the dining-room, was she relieved of still more dish-washing by the growing, and apparently too favored, younger sister, Sallie.

The evening that followed Mary's truant walk along the river was one of those when she should

have been granted this modicum of relief, but now, after the brief five o'clock supper, now headed Sallie set up a wail as the table was cleared.

"What's the matter with you now?" demanded Mrs. Denbigh, her harassed eyes blinking in the lamplight, and her harder face more than commonly stern.

"I ain't feelin' good," said Sallie. "I'm tired. I'm sick. I don't want to wash no dishes."

Mrs. Denbigh shot a glance through the dumb-doorway to the littered parlor, but the face of her inattentive husband was hidden behind the rustling sheets of the *Daily Ivy*, gripped by one great grimy fist, while the stubby forefinger of the other hand spelled out the more sublimities of the personal-column, facetiously headed "Our Card-Basket." His huge bulk bulged over all the edges of the uncomfortable patent armchair in which he was sitting: a picture of gorged contentment. There was as yet no help to be expected from him.

It was Mary, experienced in such attacks, who made ready to defend the law.

"You ain't sick," she declared.

"I am, too!" sniffed Sallie. "I'm awful sick."

"Get out: you ate more'n I did. You just want to make me do the work, an' I won't, 'cause it's your turn. So there!"

Mary's homecoming had, as it happened, not been the signal for a renewal of hostilities between her mother and herself. The former had just then been too hard at work to have either energy or thought in that direction, and throughout the evening meal the girl had deemed it wise to maintain a reticence

calculated to keep her in the domestic background. Now, however, she had impulsively come forward, and the step at once brought her to Mrs. Denbigh's attention.

"After what *you* done this noon," she said to Mary, "you'd better keep your mouth shut. Go and wash them dishes!"

But Mary knew that she had now gone too far to retreat.

"It wasn't my fault the stew was spilled," she protested; "and anyhow, you did lick me onc't for that. Sallie just wants to shove her work off on me."

"I don't," blubbered Sallie. "I'll do 'em some evenin' when it's your turn."

"Yes," Mary sneered, "I know how you will."

"I will—I will—I will so!"

Sallie's voice rose to a shrill shriek, and then suddenly broke off in the middle of a note: there was a sound of elephantine stirring from the parlor, and the feared master of the house, moved at last from his lethargy, rolled into the double doorway and seemed nearly to block it.

One of the young reporters of *The Spy* had once remarked—not in print—that Owen Denbigh resembled nothing so much as the stern of an armored cruiser seen from a catboat. How much of the covering of his powerful frame was fat and how much muscle is matter for conjecture; his life in the iron mills had certainly given him a strength at least approaching the appearance, and had blackened his large hands, reddened his big face, and grayed his bristling hair and his fiercely flaring mustache.

"Whad's ahl this devil's racket?" he shouted, in the voice he used in triumphing over the turmoil of the puddling-furnace.

Both children quailed before him, each prepared, regardless of its merits, for acquittal or condemnation, as he might decide the issue. Even Mrs. Denbigh drew back and set her lips to silence.

The giant raised a threatening hand.

"Be ye ahl gone deef?" he demanded. "Whad's ahl this devil's racket fur?"

In a panic of self-preservation, the two girls began at once to clamor forth their woes.

"Sallie won't wash the dishes!" cried Mary.

"I'm sick," sobbed Sarah, "an' mom says Mary must wash 'em because she upset the stew this noontime!"

In the merits of any case brought before him, the household Solomon was as little interested as if he had been the judge of a law-court. His years of overwork had limited his sense of a just division of toil among others, and his long oppression by task-masters had made himself a merciless task-master. Like the men that had driven him, he delighted most in driving those who were the hardest to drive. Sallie was too young to furnish appreciable resistance, but in the awakening Mary he now saw something that approached worthy opposition. He turned first to his wife.

"Did you tell 'er," he inquired, his stubby forefinger leveled at Mary—"did you tell 'er to wash 'un?"

Mrs. Denbigh bowed her sweating forehead in timid assent.

Then the father looked again at the offender.

"Wash 'un!" he ordered, and marched back to his parlor, his armchair, and his evening paper.

Mary knew her father too well not to know also the price of disobedience. Sullenly, but without hesitation, she retreated to the little kitchen and took up her uncongenial task.

Girlhood, then, must be denied much of its claim to recreation; the social machine was pitiless. Young life was a period of menial service from which the sole escape was marriage, whether to stranger or to friend. That a stranger should harm her was, to Mary—as it is to most girls of her age and environment—an idea unentertained: strangers were too few, and the world of moral fact too closely shut and guarded. Boys she had always been cautioned against in vague generalities; but she understood that they were prohibited because their company was a delectable luxury reserved for older and marriageable girls whose younger sisters were needed only to help in the household tasks.

Rebellion once more reddened her heart—rebellion, as she thought, against her own particular condition, but the old rebellion, actually, that burns, at one time or another, in every heart: the revolt of the individual, more or less conscious of its individuality, against the conditions that are combined to crush it. She poured the water from the heavy iron tea-kettle into the tin dishpan with a quick anger that was not eased when two or three of the scalding drops leaped back against her bared, round arms. She flung the home-boiled soap after the water, and she clattered the dishes as loudly as she

dared. Through the window—her soul hot with the sense of the injustice done her—she could see the happy lights in Etta's house, and, her hands deep in the greasy fluid, it came to her suddenly that she had been a fool to neglect—to repudiate—to-day what might have been the golden chance to such an estate as her sister's.

She had heard the protesting Sarah sent to bed; had heard her mother return to the parlor with the sewing-basket, and, finally, as she was putting away the last of the dishes in the china-closet in the dining-room, she caught the voices of both of her parents.

Dimly glimpsed from the small apartment beyond, she knew the scene well enough to reconstruct it perfectly. The crowded little parlor was like a hundred others in the immediate neighborhood, a mathematical result of the community of which it was a part. There were the two front windows with the horsehair chairs before each and, between them, the marble-top table bearing the family Bible. There was the gilt mirror over the gorgeously lambrequined mantelpiece, which was littered with a brass clock, dried-grass-bearing yellow vases, stiff photographs of dead or married younger Denbighs, and " memorial cards " with illegible gilt lettering upon a ground of black. Close by the cabinet-organ on one side and the green sofa on the other—the sofa adorned with a lace " tidy " that would never remain neatly in its place—her father and mother sat, separated by the purple-covered center-table, their gaze interrupted by the tall glass case that contained the bunch of white *immortelles* from the grave of their eldest son.

Mrs. Denbigh was finishing, it seemed, the narrative of the town's latest scandal.

"I never knowed Mrs. Drumbaugh was that soft-hearted," the mother was saying. "Nobody in town was fooled over the reason for why her Jennie went away, an' yet here the girl comes back a'ready, and Mrs. Drumbaugh, church-member though she is, takes her into the house ag'in—her an' her baby along with her."

What was it in the words that brought Mary to a sudden pause? Her mother had always been, like most drudges, a gossip, and had sought, in repeating scandal about her acquaintances, that relief from drudgery which she knew how to obtain only by this second-hand thrill of evil. The girl had heard and disregarded the telling of many such a tale, and yet, to-night, she stood there first listening in uncomprehending horror to the narrative and then awaiting the inevitable paternal comment upon it.

"Tuke 'er bahk, hey?" rumbled Owen Denbigh. "Well, ef she bay sooch a fule, she deserves the scandal ov't. Thank God no youngling o' ourn ever went the devil's way. I hahve ahlways bin sure what I'd do to 'un ef she did, though."

He paused a moment, as if to have his wife inquire as to the terrible punishment that he had reserved for such an error, and then, as no inquiry was forthcoming, he gave his statement at any rate, with all the cold ferocity of a Judge Jeffries pronouncing sentence.

"Bay 'un thirty year old an' noot another sin ag'in 'un," he declared, "I would beat 'un within

a bare inch o' 'er deeth, an' turn 'un oot to live the life 'un had picked fur herself!"

The whole intent of that speech Mary was incapable of comprehending, but she understood enough to tremble and then to fan to destructive fury the fire of her rebellion. Of a sudden, the atmosphere of the house had become unendurable. She was gasping like a sparrow under a bell-glass.

Stealthily she crept into the hall. Carefully she took her coat and faded hat from the rack. Very gently she opened the front door and stole into the street. She felt dumbly that the world was wrong, that youth should not have to work, and that to seize the fruit of pleasure should not be matter for punishment, but for congratulation.

I do not think that she meant to pass by the hotel that evening. I do not believe that most of us, in such moments, are actuated any more by motive than we are directed by discretion. Nevertheless, when the clutch of her emotions had enough loosened from her throat to permit her to take account of her whereabouts, the time, and the place, it was a quarter after six by the town-clock; Mary was just before the plate-glass window where the drummers sat, and, only a minute later, the stranger of the morning was again at her side.

"Von't you chust say that you're not *mad* vith me?" he was asking.

She was so frightened that she was conscious of no other definite sensation, much less of any ordered thought or opinion; but she looked fairly at him, and of what she saw she was immediately fully aware.

He was a young man, but the sort of young man



that might be anywhere from nineteen to thirty-two, because he had the figure and the face of the former age and the eyes and the expression of the latter. The hair on his head was black and curly; though his hands were not the working-hands with which Mary was best acquainted, they were almost covered with a lighter down of the same growth; and through the pale olive of his sorely clean-shaven cheeks shone the blue-black hint of a wiry beard fighting for freedom. His lips were thick when he did not smile and thin when he did, with teeth very white; and his gray glance had a penetrating calculation about it that made the girl instinctively draw her coat together and button it.

To his speech she could pay, just then, scarcely any attention, except to feel that its quick, thick quality, and its ictus on the vowels, denoted the foreigner; but his clothes were a marvel that would not be denied. His coat and trousers of green were cut in the extreme of a fashion that was new to her; his brown plush hat was turned far down on one side and far up on the other; his waistcoat, of purple striped by white, was held by large mother-of-pearl buttons, and his shoes, long and pointed, were the color of lemons.

Impulsively she had refused an answer to his first words; but the young man was a member of the persistent race, and speedily followed the first speech with a second.

"Chust say the vord," he pleaded, "und I von' bother you no more. I only vanted to make myself *square* vith you."

Mary hesitated. Something, she knew, she feared,

but whether it was the man, herself, or the habit of obedience she could not tell. He was polite, he was respectful; he came, it was clear, from a happier world than her own—and, as against her own she was now in open revolt, a certain parley with this visitor from an alien orb seemed likely to constitute a fitting declaration of independence. Conditions had worked upon her to desperation, and the same conditions, little as she guessed it, had, under the mask of chance, inevitably provided this avenue of protest.

"Oh," she said, "I'm not mad at you, if that's what you want to know."

"I'm glad of that," he easily answered, as they turned, quite naturally, away from the main street. "But I thought you gonsidered me *fresh.*"

"Well, I hadn't never been introduced to you, you know."

The young man laughed.

"I'll introduce myself!" said he. "My name's Max Crossman—not my real name, because I vas born in Hungary an' nobody could say my real name ofer here. My fader is a big distiller in New York—he's vorth half a million un' more: anybody'll tell you about him. 'Und he's put me on the road for him."

This and much more he told her in the following minutes. He drew a truly brilliant picture of his parental home, and, animadverting now and then with scorn on the town in which he now found himself, he painted in the highest colors the glory of Manhattan.

New York, it appeared, was a city of splendid

leisure. Its entire four millions of population spent their days in rest and their nights in amusement. There were the rumbling cable-cars, the roaring elevated trains, the subway expresses, which reached out and drew the Battery within twenty minutes of the Bronx. There were the realities that had been only vague magic names to this girl: the East Side, the Bowery, the Metropolitan Opera House, the Waldorf. Nobody went to bed before three o'clock in the morning, or woke before one in the afternoon. Nobody was ugly and nobody was old. There were no books to study, no errands to run, no dishes to wash. There were only the cabs and the taxis to ride in, the hundred theaters to see, the cafés and the music, Fifth Avenue with its palaces, and Broadway, from Thirty-fourth to Forty-third "von big, yellow, happy electric lighd."

She listened. As he spoke, though she did not know it, the far-off orchestras were calling her, as if the sound of the city deafened her to all other sounds, as if the lights of New York blinded her to the lights of home.

Her own story, as she in turn briefly told it to him, provided her with the one touch of contrast needed to make the lure of the new dream complete, provided him with the one text necessary for the implications he frankly wanted her to receive. She was already so metropolitan that, when she agreed to go to the moving-picture show, she passed the portals of "The Happy Hour," as the place was optimistically entitled, with a superior scorn for all that it had to offer.

The narrow hall was dark when they entered—

Max pocketing the large roll of yellow bills from which he had drawn the price of their admission—and, as they sat down, half-way toward the stage, there was being shown, on the screen, the absurd adventures of a tramp, who entered an ornate hotel grill-room and who, among wondering, well-dressed guests, was proceeding to order an elaborate meal.

"That's the *A*stor," whispered Max, loudly. "I'd know id anyvheres."

The pictured tramp was, of course, unable to pay his score, and, equally, of course, was pursued as he leaped through an open window.

Max acted as Mary's guide during the tableaux of the chase that followed. Now the quarry was darting among the congested traffic of Times Square; now he had clambered over the platform of a Forty-second Street surface-car; now he was running up the steep stairway of the Sixth Avenue "L," and now, the hunters close at his heels, he was dashing along Thirty-fourth Street past the Waldorf, turning down toward the Park Avenue Hotel, and so, at last, was caught at the nearby entrance to the subway.

When the lights flared up at the conclusion of the little drama, Mary sighed as if suddenly plunged from fairyland down to the real world below. And then the sigh changed to a gasp of fright: in the same row, only six seats away, her sister Etta was sitting.

The girl started to rise.

"What's wrong?" asked the astonished Max.

"I must go. Don't come out with me. Wait a minute, and then follow. I'll be at the next corner up street. That's our Etta over there!"

But Max did not seem fully to comprehend the warning. He rose with Mary, and made some stir in doing it, so that, as the pair reached the aisle, Etta's eyes were drawn in the direction of her sister and the man.

Mary, though she hastily turned her head, thought that she saw recognition in this sudden glance. She thought that she saw recognition turn to amazement, and amazement to rebuke. Instantly, there rose before her the reefs of ultimate domestic disaster. With Max in close attendance, she hurried to the door.

Outside she did not speak until they had reached the comparative seclusion of a less frequented street. Then she turned hotly upon the youth, whom she considered the cause of her peril.

"Why was you such a fool?" she demanded. "Didn't you hear me say for you not to come out when I did?"

"I didn't understand you," Max humbly expostulated. "But vhat difference does it make, anyvays?"

"Difference? Why, you were so blamed noisy that Etta looked round an' seen me. She'll go straight home and tell pop I was here with you."

"Vell," protested Max, "it's not seven o'clock yet, und I'm not eatin' you, vas I?"

"That don't matter. You don't know my pop!"

"Vhat'll he do?"

"He'll"—Mary remembered previous punishments for smaller offenses, and recalled the judgment that she had heard her father pronounce on a hypothetical offender. "He'll beat me till I'm near

dead," she declared; "an' then, like as not, he'll turn me out of the house."

They were at pause in the shadow of an old buttonwood tree, Max leaning against the gnarled trunk, the girl facing him, erect.

Even as she sketched her possible punishment, the possible became probable. She was afraid, and this young man, who had been so deferential, so protecting, who had given her so alluring a glimpse of another world, seemed her only refuge.

He put out his hands and, gently, took both of hers.

At that touch the last of her anger melted, almost to tears.

"Look here," he said. "I've been decent to you, haven't I? I ain't tried to get fresh?"

She shook her head, not trusting speech.

"Vell, then, listen here," he pursued. "If your old man gets gay, chust remember *that*. You ain't treated righd at home, the best of times. You said so yourself. Un' this here jay town's no *place* for a pretty young lady like you, anyvays. So, if there's any trouble, you come for me, und I'll get you avay from here."

The girl thrilled with a delicious sense of adventure. She trembled with the foretaste of a new delight. The passing praise of her looks and of her newly acquired maturity, a novel sound in her ears, was not lost upon her; but even that was dwarfed by the tenor of her companion's words, and the wonderful current that ran from his hands to hers. Was this what had been meant, that truant afternoon, by the calling birds, the leafing trees and the

poignant air along the river? Was this what young women felt when lovers told their love? She could not have formulated the questions, but her heart asked them, and Max, meanwhile, was repeating:

"I'll get you avay from here!"

"How—how could you do it?" she gasped.

"It'd be dead easy. If there's any scrap, you vatch your chanc't un' give the house the slip. I'll be vaitin' at the hotel till midnight. Delephone me from the nearest drugstore, un' ve'll take a trolley down the line un' catch a train to N'York un' be married there this same nighd. I've a friend who's a minister un' vill get out of his bed any hour I'd ask him."

He pressed her hands tighter, and, as he leaned against the tree, drew her slightly toward him.

But Mary, though she did not know why, still fearful, held back.

"I—we couldn't do that," she said.

"Vhy not?" he demanded.

"Because—why, we couldn't go away together, alone: it wouldn't be right."

Max straightened suddenly. He released her hands and placed one tight arm about her waist.

"It vould be righd if I *lofed* you," he said. "Und I do lof you. Ve city folk, ve can't do things slow like you liddle town people. Vhen I saw you this morning, I knew I liked you, because you vas so different from all these rubes around here; un' vhen I talk vith you this efenin' I know I lof you. Listen here: you come avay with me to-*nighd*. Ve vill go righd ofer to N'York, un' there ve get married righd *avay*. No more school, nor dishvashin', nor scoldin'. Your

own fader vill be pleased vhen it's ofer, because my fader is reech, un' my fader vill be pleased too, because he's been devilin' me to marry for more'n a 'ye-ar, only I nefer till now found a girl I *lof*. Come on, Mary: I lof you!"

Her eyes swam in a mist. They had come then—love and freedom, hand in hand. Her soul grew faint within her. She struggled a little, fluttering like a young bird in a capturing palm, but he drew her tighter, and his free hand passed electrically across her cheek.

"Come on avay!" he urged softly.

"I—I don't know what to do!" she panted. "Wait—wait"—it was the ancient cry of womanhood upon the brink—"wait till to-morrow!"

There was a step behind them, which Max was the first to hear. He freed her, and they stood mute until the shadowy passer-by had gone. It was an incident that at least lessened the spell.

"Perhaps it's all right," said Mary. "Perhaps Etta didn't see me, an' I can tell 'em I was over at my girl-friend's."

"It's only puttin' off vhat's got to happen *some*-time," Max argued. "This town's no place for a girl like you."

He leaned toward her, but she drew, reluctantly, away. What might be well by day may well seem ill by night.

"Wait till to-morrow, anyhow," she urged.—But to-morrow, she wondered, how should she explain her afternoon away from school?

Max considered.

"All righd," he at last nodded. "Go home un'

think things ofer vith yourself; but I'll be chust as ready to-morrow as I am to-day. You've got to get avay from all this ugliness. Remember that, un' remember I hafn't been *fresh,* un' I vant righd now to marry you. I hafn't efen tried to kiss you. Think of that, un' think that I'll be vaitin' up at the hotel, in case of drouble, till *mid*nighd."

He wheeled at that, and left her.

Ten minutes later—at a quarter to seven, so rapidly had the drama unrolled itself—she had reached home to find that Etta had been there before her. Denbigh, on the early morning shift that week, was already in bed, but her mother tossed the truant into the parlor and locked both doors while she went up stairs to waken him.

He came down at once, in his nightshirt, roaring. He turned the key and flung wide the door.

The room, however, was empty, and the window open. Mary and Max were already together, hurrying through the warm spring evening toward the trolley-car that was to carry them on the first stage of their journey to New York.

III

THE SPECTER OF FEAR

AT sixteen an angry and frightened girl running away from a home where the necessity for work must cheat her youth of its just rights—at sixteen such a girl cannot analyze her emotions, and Mary's were in sheer panic. She had never before been farther from her own town than the ten miles' distant county-seat, had never before been at more than verbal odds with her parents. Philadelphia had stood for the City of Lanterns, and a quick retort for revolution. Now she was bound for New York and marriage.

There was none of the few persons on the trolley-car that knew her, yet she kept her face to the window and away from them. There was no chance of capture, yet she trembled whenever the brakes creaked and a new passenger came aboard. It might, perhaps, be truly said that she did not feel at all, and that the power of poignant realization was still paralyzed by her own action. It was as if she had amputated a portion of her spiritual being, and was still numb from the shock.

Whatever Max's own feelings, he at any rate conducted himself in the manner least calculated to rouse his companion. He spoke only to give the few necessary directions, and then in a low tone, not facing her, but looking straight ahead. He had slipped

her the money to pay her own fare and, the better to deceive whoever might follow them, had told her to buy a round-trip ticket to a point beyond that for which they were bound. With his lemon-colored shoes planted upon his suitcase, he sat beside her, but he kept as wide a space between them as the short seat would permit; and it was only under the discreet covering of the light overcoat upon his knee that he kept a tight and reassuring grasp of her firm hand.

At a mile from the county-town they left the car —Mary first and Max twenty yards behind—and then, for the competent young man seemed to have prepared for everything, walked across the fields, under the stars, to a flag-station where, within a few minutes, they could catch a New York express. Arm in arm they walked, but Max never once frightened her by a burst of affection, never once did more than to encourage her by plain statements of his loyalty and more ornate descriptions of the life before her.

"You vill *like* it," he concluded. "I know you vill be happy, Mary."

Mary's breath caught a little in her throat.

"Ye—yes," she answered. "Only, I can't help thinking some about mom."

"Sure you can't," Max immediately agreed. "You mustn't led her vorry longer than you can help it. I tell you vhat ve'll do. Ofer here in the station, you wride her a letter und I'll haf it mailed."

"Oh, but then pop would see it, an' he might follow us!"

"Don' gif no names or say vhere ve're goin',

und how can he? By the time he gets it, ve'll be safe married, anyways. Here ve are at the station. I've got some paper un' pencil und an envellup: I'll tell you chust vhat to wride."

He did tell her, and this note, given to the train-porter, was mailed farther along the line:

"*Dear Mother:* Don't please worry about me. I will soon be back for a visit, only I have gone to Buffalo to get married. He is a nice young man and his father is rich, for I could not stand to have Pop beat me, nor do other people's work any more.

"Your aff. daughter,

"MARY DENBIGH."

The train, which Max had duly signaled, had stopped just as the writing was ended, and the pair of runaways had hurried into the last seat of the rear car.

During the journey that followed, Mary's nerves, accustomed to early hours, gave way not to tears, but to the exhaustion consequent upon the strain of her crowded day. Her hat in her lap, her russet hair made a pillow for her against the sharp window-sill, and, with Max's coat piled at the pane to protect her from the keen arrows of the inrushing night air, she lay back, the pink cheeks and the red mouth paler than an hour since, and the blue eyes closed. She did not seem to sleep, and yet it was in a dream that the ride ended, in a dream that she found herself one of a hurrying crowd stamping down the platform and into the huge elevator at the Jersey City station, in a dream that she clung faithfully to Max's arm as the sudden lights and damp odors struck her and as she dropped upon a straw-covered bench of a swaying car, which shot them immedi-

ately through a tunneled darkness into the very depths of the earth.

She knew from her geography that New York was separated from New Jersey by water.

"When do we cross the ferry, Max?" she asked.

Max smiled, his thin lips showing his white teeth in sharp contrast to his olive skin.

"We're crossing it now," he answered.

"But where's the water?"

Max, mopping his dark forehead with a purple-bordered handkerchief, pointed to the roof of the car.

"Up there," he said. "Ve're in the tube, you know."

She did not know, but she was too much ashamed of her rural ignorance further to discover it by unconsidered questions, and so full of a pulsing wonder at what was to come next, so full of the expectation of the child at her first melodrama that she had place for no backward thought. She sat silent until they had come out of the tunnel, climbed a windy stair, and emerged upon a thoroughfare as much ablaze as if all the stars of heaven had descended to light it, and as brimming with moving life as her father's mill at ten o'clock in the morning.

Max regarded the girl's open-eyed wonder.

"Now," he said, "ve'll chust chump in a taxi un' go get a good supper, un' then, vhile the vaiter's filling our order, I'll first do a little delephoning."

He put up his dark hand; a passing automobile, its tin flag raised, hummed up to the curb, and Mary, clinging timidly to the arm of her betrothed, began her first ride in a taxicab.

[redacted]

panion's arm, and her companion was alert to note her agitation.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, in a voice that he well meant to be tender.

"I—I don't know," she began, her red underlip indrawn. "I—aren't we goin' pretty fast?"

"Who? Us? Vhy, I was chust thinking I'd tell him to hit up the pace a little. Are you scared?"

Her pride would not permit confession.

"Oh, no," she lied; "I'm not scared."

"But you are shivering."

"I guess I'm kind of chilly."

"All righd. Chust vait a minute un' ve'll soon be at the restaurant un' varm up. You'll like that restaurant: it's von of the swellest in town."

"But it's pretty late," she ventured. "Your friend—are you sure he——"

"Who? The minister?" Max patted her hand with reassuring affection. "Don't you vorry about him. He's all for me, und I'll get him out of bed chust as soon as ve've ordered our supper."

A few blocks more, and Max, aided by a marvelously tall person in a wonderful uniform, was helping her, with what she considered an elaborate courtesy, to dismount from the taxi, pass under a glass awning and, through a changing stream of hurrying waiters and arriving and departing guests terribly arrayed, to climb a softly carpeted stair and enter a brilliant balcony open to the street and full of chattering men and women eating and drinking at a score of tables. Even in her fright, it was with a touch of admiration that she observed how Max—her Max—seemed to be known to the immediately

attentive waiters, and how, smiling, they hurried to make way for him.

They secured a corner table, a relatively quiet corner table, and there, with a servant standing by, pencil in hand, and with a huge double-paged menu-card before each of them, made ready for their meal.

"Chust you order vhatever you like," said Max. "Pretty near efferything in the vorld's on there, but if you vant anything that you can't see, chust you ask for it."

Mary looked at the card. In spite of all that had passed, and all that now filled her heart, she was young, and youth is so fortunate as to be able to eat in the trough of any emotional sea. She was a child, and, by the sure logic of childhood, who-so thought to feed her could be nothing but a friend.

The card, however, was of small assistance. Its very size was appalling, and its offerings were made in an unfamiliar tongue.

"You get what you like," she at last submitted. "I'm so hungry I can eat anything."

He saw her difficulty so well that he could rescue her from it without seeming to see it at all.

"Vell, I'm vith you there," he said cheerfully, and proceeded to obey her, rattling off a list of dishes of no one of which she had ever heard before. "Un' have the Martinis dry," he cautioned in conclusion, "vith a dash of absinthe in them—un' bring them righd avay: I'm spittin' gotten."

The waiter left, and, as he did so, Max again addressed the girl.

"Excuse me for von minute," he said.

But Mary's blue eyes opened wide in instant alarm, and she put a detaining hand upon his wrist.

"Don't!" she quavered. "Don't go away! I—I don't want to be left alone."

Max laughed outright.

"Haf you forgot our minister?" he demanded. "Ve don't vant to go to his house vithout first giffin' him a chanc't to get some *clothes* on. Efen up your vay, the ministers vear a suit under their nighd-gowns vhen they marry people."

She smiled faintly at his labored wit, and, as her heart fluttered at this definite approach to the end of her journey, permitted him to go.

Had he been absent for only the minute that he had promised, the time would have seemed long to the waiting girl, but he remained invisible for much longer, and to Mary, watching the laughing, uncaring strangers from another life, the terror of the city in her soul and the sense of all that she had done lurking in the shadows of her brain, the quarter of an hour appeared to be four times that period. Once she feared that he had met with some accident; once she was saved from starting in search of him only by the knowledge that, in so doing, she must infallibly lose herself. She would have made inquiries of a waiter, but the waiters were too imposing. She would have cried, but she was afraid to cry. She would have ended, perhaps, by some utter betrayal of all that was battling within her; but, just when she was sure, for the thousandth time, that she could endure no more, she saw Max coming toward her from the long-watched door.

As soon as she noticed his strangely stern face, the old fear gave place to a fresh one.

"What's happened?" she asked.

He pulled back his chair spitefully and flung himself into it.

"These crazy laws of your America," he snarled, "there ain't no sense in them!"

"What's the matter?" she repeated.

"Vhy, it's this way. Of course, it don' make no difference; it only puts things off till *mor*nin'; but it's this vay: I got my minister friend on the 'phone, un' he's all ready to marry us, only he says the law says ve must haf a license from City Hall first, un' if ve don't get von, he can go to chail because of marryin' us vith*out* it."

"Well," said Mary, "let's get a license."

Max spread forward the palms of his dark hands.

"How can ve?" he demanded. "The City Hall closes in the afternoon un' don't open till *mor*nin'."

Here, apparently, was tragedy. Specific reasons for its tragic elements the girl would, perhaps, have found it hard to give, but that it was tragic she knew instinctively. Her blue eyes opened wide in fright.

"What are we to do?" she pleaded.

But Max, the resourceful, had been, it appeared, only temporarily checkmated.

"I thought of that," he said. "Ve can't get married now till to-morrow; but my modder has a good friend un' I delephone *her*. She told me she'd be glad to have you her guest ofer to-nighd. I'll take you there in a taxi, un' go home for my own sleep. I'd take you vith me, but it vouldn't do to spring a new vife on the family vithout varnin'. Then I'll

have talked vith my own people, und I'll bring them around to the veddin', first thing in the mornin'."

Mary, however, quailed.

"I don't want to do that," she inconsequently responded. "I don't want to go to strange people's alone."

"Oh, don't you vorry, now," Max soothed her. "I'll go vith you for a liddle vhile un' see that you make yourself at home. This friend of my modder's is a fine voman, un' she's *rich*. She is Mrs. Légère. She lives in a fine house: you'll like her."

He persisted in his persuasions, and, in the end, he won her acquiescence. After all, here were the walls of the city about her, and she had no choice.

While they had been talking, the waiter had returned and had placed before each of them one of the stemmed glasses full of the pale yellow concoction that Max had ordered.

"Vell," grinned the host, "here's happy returns of the day un' many *of* them."

He took his glass in his hairy hand and flung the contents down his throat.

But Mary looked at the drink in growing alarm.

"Isn't it whiskey?" she asked.

"No-o-o! I don't drink vhiskey. This is only vermout' un' tchin."

"Gin's just the same as whiskey," the girl protested.

"Not by a long sighd it ain't."

"It's liquor, anyhow."

"Sure, it's liquor; but drink a liddle of it; it vill gif you an appetite."

Mary shook her russet head.

"I don't need no appetite," she said; "I'm half starved as it is."

"You'll need something to grind up these here Hungarian things, though."

"No," said Mary; "I'd rather not."

"But efferybody does here in New York."

"Then I guess I'll wait till I'm a regular New Yorker."

"Don't your fader drink?"

"Sometimes he does," said the girl, conclusively; "an' that's why I don't."

He urged her no further; he even denied himself a glass of the wine that he had ordered, and he succeeded, by this abstinence, in regaining whatever he had lost of her faith in him. He ate heartily himself, and if his manner of eating was not precisely that most common in restaurants of a more careful sort, this was something that the girl would have failed to note even had she not been so busily engaged by wonder at the service and consumption of the novel food. It was not until, contentedly sighing, she had sunk back from the wreck of her second ice, that she remembered again the lateness of the hour.

With a display of his large bills and another flurry of attendants, they left the restaurant, walking among the gayly dressed and loudly laughing people at the tables, passing down the heavily carpeted stairs, and entering another pulsing motor-car. Max leaned out of the door and gave an address that Mary did not hear; the chauffeur threw forward the metal clutch, and the automobile shot ahead on its journey.

They went for some time under the still hammer-

ing elevated; then turned through a quieter and darker street; threaded rapidly, twisting hither and yon, a dozen other highways and byways and at length drew up at their destination. Max leaped lightly to the pavement and tossed the driver a bill.

"Neffer mind the change," he said, and had scarcely helped Mary to dismount before the car had snorted away into the night, leaving the pair of young lovers in the scarcely broken darkness and in a silence that seemed surrounded by a dim, distant rumble of city-sound.

The girl could see little of her whereabouts. She observed only that she was in a slumbering block of blinded dwelling-houses, a scene different from any that New York had thus far presented to her. One distant, sputtering arc-light succeeded only in accentuating the gloom; underfoot the way resounded to the slightest tread; from the little patch of inky sky into which the roofs blended above, a bare handful of anæmic stars twinkled drowsily, and, on both sides, from corner to corner, the uniform, narrow houses rose in somber repetition, each with its brief, abrupt flight of steps, each with its blank windows, each seemingly asleep behind its mask.

More than this, indeed, Mary's tired eyes could have had no time to observe, for Max's strong fingers were at once curled under her armpit, and she was hurried up to one of the innumerable mute doorways. He pressed a button hidden somewhere in the wall, and, almost immediately, the door swung open.

The pair looked from darkness upon a rosy twilight. Under the feeble rays of the pink-shadowed

stairway, there were just visible the outlines of a full-blown form.

"Hello, Rosie!" cried Max as, quickly snapping the door behind him, he passed by his charge and seized an invisible hand. "You vaited up for us un' come to the door yourself! That vas good of you."

In spite of her Gallic cognomen, Mrs. Rose Légère replied in the tone and vernacular of Manhattan Island.

"Sure I waited for you," she answered. "But don't talk so loud: you'll wake the whole family.—And is this the little lady, eh?"

Half disposed to resist, Mary felt herself gently propelled forward by Max, and then enveloped in an ample, strangely perfumed embrace, while two full warm lips printed a kiss upon her cool young cheek.

"Come into the back parlor," said Rose Légère, lightly seizing the girl's hand. "I want to get a look at the bride."

She led the way past the closed double doors of the front room on the ground floor, and into a rear apartment that, though not brilliantly illuminated, was far better lighted than the hall.

It was a room the like of which Mary had never seen, decorated in colors that outshone the rainbow and filled to overflowing with furniture that, to the undiscriminating eyes of the girl, gave it the air of a chamber in the Cave of Monte Cristo. Gilt-framed pictures of beautiful men and women—she supposed they must be Grecian men and women—flamed, in more than lifelike hues, from the crimson

walls. The tall lamp on the blue-clothed table was shaded in red; the thick rug flowered gorgeously; the deep chairs were upholstered in pale brown, and the lazy sofa on which, as Max closed the inner door upon their entrance, Mrs. Légère seated herself with her guest, was stuffed with soft pillows of bewildering radiance.

Nor, when Mary came to look at her, did the hostess seem out of keeping with her surroundings. To the girl's home Owen Denbigh had once brought a large, lithographed calendar, issued by a brewery, and depicting, at its top, a woman of the elder Teutonic days, very red and white, with long yellow hair, and a body of rounded proportions, which threatened to grind to powder the rock on which she sat, and desperately endangered the filmy garments that enfolded without clothing her. It was of this picture that Mary instantly thought when she got her first full view of Mrs. Légère.

The hostess was clad in a long, fluttering, baby-blue kimona, spotted by embroidered white dragons, with sleeves that fell despairingly from her puckered elbows, disclosing thick white arms with rolls of fat at the wrists, and plump hands and fingers the almond shaped nails of which gleamed like the points of daggers. The folds of light silk, held by a large amethyst pin at the base of her sturdy throat, bulged broadly over her capacious breasts and trailed, across frou-frouing lace, far beyond her heels.

All this Mary saw first, and then, looking upward across the figure that, literally, overshadowed her, she saw a large, round, good-enough-natured face, surmounting a white double chin. The corn-colored

hair was massed in an intricate maze of puffs and coils and braids, which made the girl wonder how much was its owner's natural growth and how much was due to the artifices that Mary had always longed for and had always been denied. The forehead was low and calm; the violet eyes of a more than natural brightness, with crowsfeet beside them and pouches below, only just discernible in lamplight. The brows and lashes were of a blackness that contrasted with the coiffure; the skin, here like snow and there as red as roses, and the full, easy-going mouth as crimson as a wound. Mary thought that here at last was a beautiful woman.

"I sure am glad to see you," purred Mrs. Légère, as, having divested the guest of hat and coat, she whisked these into the hall and, returning, again seated herself and fondled the visitor's passive, but flattered, hand between her own extensive, well-cared-for palms. "Max raved about you over the telephone—just raved—and, now that I get to a clinch with you, I begin to think that he knew what he was talking about."

Max was seating himself on an orange-colored ottoman opposite them. He grinned broadly, his narrowed lips showing his even, sparkling teeth.

"Sure I knew vhat I vas talkin' about," he declared.

Mary was not used to compliments, but she was too honest not to show that she liked them. She blushed, and was all the prettier for it; but she did manage to deprecate the sentiments of the better known of her critics.

"Mr. Crossman is crazy," she modestly observed.

"About you he is," said Mrs. Légère; "and," she added, "I don't blame him.—But look here"—she placed a crooked forefinger under the girl's chin and turned the blushing face upward—"look here, what a tired little woman it is!—Max, you're so careless, I'll bet you've never thought to give this poor child a drop of wine to strengthen her after all that traveling!"

"I tried to get her to," said Max, "but she vouldn't take it."

"What?"

"I don't drink," explained Mary.

"Of course you don't, but," Mrs. Légère elucidated, "taking a glass or two of wine after a railroad ride isn't drinking."

"No-o," Mary granted; "but I don't care for it."

"I hope not—only taken this way it's medicine. I don't blame you for not drinking in a restaurant with a bad boy like Max; but you need it now; you're all played out. This is as good as your home till to-morrow, you know. Just have a little with me; I'm old enough to be your mother, and we won't give Max a drop—just to punish him.—Cassie!"

She had run through the speech with a rapidity that had left the girl no chance for reply, and now, before Mary could move her lips, she had, with amazing agility, leaped to a back door, opened it, called an order into the darkness beyond, and as quickly returned to her former position on the sofa.

"It will be the best thing in the world for you," she said. "The doctor orders it for me, and so I always have it ready on ice."

As she concluded speaking, the door through

which she had called was reopened and there entered a tall, raw-boned, glum, colored girl, whose shining ebony skin was darkened by the white apron that she wore. She bore a tray on which was a gilt-topped bottle and two narrow glasses.

"Put it there, Cassie," said Mrs. Légère, pointing to the table.

The girl obeyed and left the room. Max seized the bottle, ripped off the gilding and, wrapping his purple-bordered handkerchief about the neck, with one dexterous twist, drew out the resounding cork.

A living foam gushed from the neck as the self-appointed butler poured into the two glasses a pale gold fluid, which creamed angrily to their edges, and then subsided until first one addition and then another set them boiling again.

Mrs. Légère took a glass in each hand and pressed the foremost into the passive palm of the girl.

"Well," said she, in a phrase new to Mary, "here we are."

Mary hesitated, the glass to her lips. She could hear the liquid whispering to her, and particles seemed to jump from it and sting her eyes.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Vine," said Max.

"But what kind of wine?" she weakly delayed.

"My dear," her entertainer informed her, "there is only one kind of wine in New York."

"It's tchampagne," hissed Max, as if the name were something too sacred to be spoken in the tone of ordinary conversation. "Un' this kind costs eighd dollars a bottle."

The words and the connotation had their lure.

Champagne—she had heard of it as the beverage of the rich; and eight dollars for one bottle—the price of two winter dresses!

"Come on," smiled Mrs. Légère.

The girl still hesitated.

"Here's to the wedding!" prompted the hostess, and drank the entire contents of her glass.

Mary took a mouthful and swallowed it. At first she nearly choked. Then the fiery liquid brought fresh tears to her blue eyes, still smarting from the gas that had, a moment before, assailed them. But finally, there began to spread through her weary body a grateful glow, and, half in apology for what she feared had been a clownish exhibition, she looked up with red lips pleasantly parted.

"Now, wasn't I right?" inquired Mrs. Légère. "Don't you feel better already?"

"I—I believe I do, thank you," Mary admitted. "Anyhow, it is pretty good, I guess—when you get used to it."

She took, bravely and with an ease now gained by experience, a second drink, and, as she held the glass before her, Max gallantly replenished it.

A bell rang and the glum, ebony maid passed through the room, closing both doors behind her.

Mary, alarmed at this nocturnal interruption, started a little, but neither of her companions seemed to regard the incident as unusual.

"You look much better," Mrs. Légère asseverated. "Finish that glass, dearie, and you'll be all to the good again."

"Do you think I'd better take so much?"

Both Max and Mrs. Légère laughed unaffectedly.

"Vhy, there ain't enough here to hurt a baby," declared the former.

Mary accepted the assurance. She did not like the taste of the champagne, but she knew now that she had been very tired, and the wine sent fresh life and energy through her sleepy limbs. She emptied the glass and felt, joyfully, all her fears and regrets slipping for her. Doubt and difficulty were resolved into a shimmering mist, were overcome, were forgotten.

The black maid thrust her head in at the hall-doorway.

Mrs. Légère rose.

"Excuse me," she said, leaving the room. "I'll be right back."

Max, the instant she was gone, rose in his turn.

"I'm going to fool her," he said. "I'm going to graft her drink!"

He took the glass that his hostess had placed upon the table, poured more of the wine into it, replenished the glass of his now unresisting companion and sat down by her side, his arm stretched behind her.

Mary, with refreshed courage, broke the silence. She was feeling like a naughty child triumphantly successful in her naughtiness.

"Do you know, Max," she said, "I gave a jump when that bell rang? I thought for a minute they might be after us."

"Nix on that," chuckled Max. "They couldn't catch us if they tried. Here's to the runavays!"

They clinked glasses and drank.

"I guess," the young man pursued, "it was chust von of Rosie's boarders."

"Her boarders? Does she run a boarding-house?" There was a note of dignified scorn in Mary's climbing voice.

"Sure she keeps boarders."

"But I——" Mary hesitated. She was tasting wine for the first time in her life, she had been tired and nerve-wracked, and now, though thoughts danced through her mind with unfamiliar rapidity, utterance seemed to her suddenly, and somewhat amusingly, to have become too clumsy to keep pace with them. "I thought," she elaborately persisted, "that—you—said—she—was rich."

"She is," said Max; "only she's got a big house she can't all use herself. Lots of people fill their houses that vay in N'York."

Mary started to formulate a reply that came glistening along the dim horizon of her mind; but just then there was a light tap at the door.

"Come in!" called Max, and Mrs. Légère re-entered.

The precaution of her hostess forced a smile from Mary.

"Why did you knock?" she asked.

But Mrs. Légère shook her corn-colored locks wisely.

"I don't ever disturb lovers," she said.

She sat down opposite the pair she was addressing and, without noticing that Max had appropriated her glass, discovered a fresh one on the mantelpiece, poured herself a mouthful of the wine and then decanted the rest for Mary.

She had just put down the empty bottle when the bell rang a second time.

"Good Lord," she sighed, "there it goes again! These people will be the death of me, losing their keys and coming in at all hours. Never mind, Cassie," she called through the rear door, "I'll go myself!" And then, to Mary, she concluded: "I'll attend to this and then I'll come right back and send Max home and show you to your room."

She left them seated on the sofa, Max's dark hand encircling the soft, young fingers of the girl as gently as if he had been a rustic wooer.

"Shall I go graft another bottle from the *kit*chen?" he asked, grinning impishly.

Mary shook her russet head.

"Not for me," she said; "I guess I've had enough."

Max again refrained from insistence. Instead, he remained beside her, and fell once more into the story that she had learned best to like,—the beautiful pictures of the wonderful city, of the work-free life that she should lead there, and of their marriage on the fast approaching morning.

Gradually, as his voice ran smoothly on, the words he was then saying became confused in her brain with other words that he had said earlier in the evening. Her eyelids grew heavy. The mood of exhilaration passed, and a weariness far more compelling than that from which she had previously suffered stole upon her. Mrs. Légère was absent for an unconscionable time. The girl yawned.

"I wonder when she's comin' back," said Mary. "I'm—I'm awful tired."

Max's hand slipped to her unresisting head and pressed it down upon his shoulder. He had not yet

so much as kissed her, and he did not kiss her now.

" Don't vorry about her," he said softly. " You're tired out. Chust close your eyes for a minute, Mary, un' I'll vake you vhen she comes."

His shoulder was very comfortable. She closed her blue eyes.

" You will wake me? " she murmured.

" Sure I vill," said Max. " I'll have you clean a*vake* before she's through knockin'."

But he must have forgotten that promise, for when Mrs. Légère at last returned, he was still sitting there among the pillows, Mary's hair fallen over his green coat, her cheeks pinker than ever, and her girlish breast rising and falling rhythmically in sleep.

IV

AWAKENING

CLINGING to a gigantic pendulum, Mary was swept through a mighty curve of roaring darkness, up from the black chasm of insensibility, and tossed, swaying over that frightful cliff, to the precipitous crag of consciousness. For what seemed many minutes, she tottered on the verge, dizzy, afraid. Then white knives, swift and sharp, slashed at her eyes and forced up the lids.

Defying closed blinds and drawn chintz curtains, the sunlight of noonday beat upon her face. She pulled something between her cheek and the leaping rays. Her hand trembled.

At first she could neither think nor recollect. The blows of an ax, regular, tremendous, were splitting her head. Her throat was hot and dry and choking. Her stomach crawled and leaped with nausea. From head to foot she was shaking with recurrent nervous chills that wracked a body of which every muscle was strained and sore.

Realization of the present came slowly, but it preceded all memory of the past. She found that the thing with which she had instinctively shaded her eyes was a sheet, and, as she lowered it, she saw, in a glance where the employment of sight was a separate pain, that she was lying among large pillows in a big brass bed, heavily mattressed. Beyond the

foot of the bed her survey could not extend, because the foot was high and hung with a pink and green down quilt; but between two windows against the wall to her right, she saw a bureau, bearing a few scant toilet articles, and opposite, on the left, there was a washstand with a basin on the floor before it and, on its top, a pitcher, a soap-tray, a small brown bottle, and a little blue box bursting with white cotton.

This was not the room in which she had first fallen asleep.

With that isolated fact flashing like a message of disastef through her brain, she sat suddenly upright in the bed; but the room pitched before her like a boat in the trough of a storm on the river at home. A wave of sickness hissed over her, and she sank back among pillows repellantly scented.

Vaguely she realized that she must be in a room somewhere above the ground floor. Dimly she began to wonder how she had got up the stairs. What would the kindly Mrs. Légère think of her condition? And that which had happened—had it lasted for an hour or a night?

That which had happened—there memory, in a blinding blast, reasserted itself. What had been but half-wittingly accepted was now wholly known. Hot irons were branding upon her brain the full history of all that had occurred: the deeds for which she had at last learned the name, and the deeds that, even in her own frightened soul, were nameless. There was nothing—nothing of her, hand and foot, and mouth and eye and soul—that was not defiled.

For herself, for Max, but most of all for the

hideous facts of life, she shook in physical disgust. Before the face of such things, what must birth and marriage mean? She opened her eyes, but she could not look at her silent witnesses; she shut her lids, but she saw, behind them, the hairy arms of a gorilla closing on her, to break her and bear her away. For one moment, all that she had loved she hated, and for the next, seizing his smiling reassurance as the one vow that could legalize what nothing could refine, all that she had come to hate she tried to force herself to love.

She understood now so much that she had never understood before: the whispered words of town gossip, the stray glimpses of lovers in the summer lanes, the cautions and the commands that had once so galled her in her home.

At the word, her mind swung back to far-away yesterday. She was sorry that she had been the cause—for she had been the cause—of the spilling of the stew. She was sorry that she had been so sharp with Sallie. She wished that she had washed the dishes less unwillingly. She still feared—she more than ever feared—the swaying bulk of masculinity that had been her father, but she began to see in him the logical result of forces that were themselves, as yet, beyond her ken; and she looked with a new and pitying vision upon the picture of her little, work-worn and care-marked mother stooping over the polished kitchen-stove.

Her breast tossed and her throat throbbed; but she was beyond tears. Painfully, slowly, yet with resolution, she struggled back to her sitting-posture in the bed.

In this position she found herself facing a long mirror hung against the opposite wall, and in the mirror she saw what was herself. With a low cry, she pulled loose the sheet and covered her nakedness.

That done, she looked again at the strange face that fronted her: a face the more strange because it was the intimate become alien, a ruin, an accusation. Framed in a tangle of dank hair, the cheeks, once pink, were chalky now, and splotched with red, the mouth that she had known only as full and firm, was loose and twisted; the eyes that had been blue, now circled with black, burned in blood-shot fields like coals of angry fire.

One impulse alone directed her: to find her clothes; to put them on; to return, as far as the mask of appearances would take her, to the self that she had been. In spite of aching head and quivering hands, she wrapped the sheet about her and, with infinite care, got from the bed. The floor seemed to sweep up to meet her, but she steadied herself against the wall and, each timid stride a separate agony, began to stumble about the room.

She looked for a clothes-closet or wardrobe, but there was neither. The only door was the door of exit, and the nearest chair was empty. In a corner she saw a pile of linen: laboriously she stooped and picked it up, unrolled a portion, and then, gasping in horror, tossed it away. On the other chair there lay a long kimona of crimson. She lifted it and found, neatly arranged below, a sheer cambric garment edged with coarse lace, two black silk stockings slashed with red, and a pair of slippers, high-heeled, with buckles of brass—for no reason that she could

have formulated, the sight sickened her. She went to the bureau and tugged at its drawers, but all that she found was a single brown bottle, like that she had first observed on the washstand, filled with white tablets and labeled " Poison." Obviously, her clothes had been taken from the room.

In a panic of shame, she groped blindly for the door: she must call for Mrs. Légère. She grasped the knob and turned it—the door was locked.

Fear, mad and unreasoning, drove its spurs into her sides. Forgetting her nausea, heedless of her pain, she ran first to one window and then to the other, but the bowed shutters, though they admitted the light, would open for nothing beside: they were fastened with riveted loops of brass, and, looking through the small space between them, she could catch only a glimpse of the street far below. She tried to argue that the key might have fallen from the lock within the room, but she could not find it, and, the sheet dropping from her shoulders, she began to rattle at the knob, and then to pound upon the panels, her voice rising swiftly from a low call to a high, hysterical, frantic cry for help.

" Mrs. Légère! Mrs. Légère! Mrs. Légère! " she cried, and then as suddenly ceased, tilted against the door, and collapsed into a naked heap upon the floor.

All power of movement seemed to have slipped from her, but when there came a heavy footfall on the stair, a swish of skirts outside and the loud rasping of a key inserted in the lock, Mary leaped galvanically to her feet, gathered the sheet about her body, and flung herself upon the bed.

The door opened and closed behind Rose Légère, who promptly relocked it and slipped the key into the swelling bosom but half concealed by her dragon-spotted, baby-blue negligé.

"What in hell's the matter with *you?*" she demanded.

A little more rotund of figure, a little looser in the cheeks, and more patently crayoned and powdered about the eyes, a little more obviously painted and a little older, she was still the woman of the brewery's advertisement. But her forehead was knotted in deep, angry wrinkles; her under jaw was thrust so far forward that the roll of fat beneath it was invisible, and her eyes snapped with malice.

Mary shrank back among the pillows.

"Weren't you yellin'?" persisted Rose. "Did you lose your voice doin' it? What in the hell's the matter with you, I say?"

With a sweep of her stout arm, she seized the girl's bare shoulder and shook it till Mary's teeth clicked like castanets.

"I'm not goin' to have any such racket in my house!" the woman asseverated, as she plied her punishment. "You've got to learn first-off to keep your mouth to yourself, and be dead sure if you don't I'll give you a real beatin'."

She tossed Mary from her, as if her victim had been a bundle of straw, and stood up again, arms akimbo, breathing scarcely beyond her normal speed.

Mary was half mad and wholly sick with dread. She wanted to cry out for rescue and dared not. She wanted to rise and try to force the door or break open the shutters, but she could not move. She could only

lie there panting for breath, with her mouth gasping and her heart hammering at her breast. She had closed her eyes. She opened them just in time to see Rose, whose slippered foot had touched something on the floor, stoop, pick up, and place beside the key in her bosom, a crumpled purple-bordered handkerchief.

"Now then," said the woman in a tone that, if still hard, was at least less intense than its predecessor, "try to tell me what's the trouble, like somebody this side of Matteawan."

With a supreme lunge at courage, Mary got her voice.

"I want my clothes," she said dully. "And where's Max?"

"Your clothes ain't fit to wear," said Rose; "an' I don't know where Max is. What you need is breakfast."

"I want my clothes," monotonously repeated Mary. "I couldn't eat to save my life. Hasn't Max come back?"

But Rose did not seem to hear the question.

"Nonsense, honey," she said, her anger seeming now entirely passed. "Of course you must eat. I got up on purpose for it, and I've set that nigger cooking a perfect peach of a breakfast."

"I want my clothes."

Rose leaned over the bed and put a soothing hand upon her questioner's fevered forehead.

"Now don't lose your nerve, dearie," she advised. "I'm your friend—honest, I am. You rest awhile and eat a little, and then maybe we'll talk things over."

"He hasn't come yet?"

"No, he hasn't. But why are you lettin' that jar you? Perhaps he's sick, too. Perhaps he's had some kind of a scrap with his old man. How do I know what's hit him? He'll show up all right in the end and, till he does show up, you just make yourself at home here and don't bother. I'll take care of you."

Something in the woman's solicitude—or it may have been the quick and unexplained change from violence to tenderness—frightened Mary even more than the initial outburst had frightened her.

"I want to go home," she quavered.

"Sure you want to go home," Rose acquiesced, without moving a muscle. "But how can you go? Max told me you'd sent your people a note saying you'd hiked out with him to be married, and how can you go home until he gets back here and you can take him along and show the goods?"

Her tone was lightly argumentative, but it was also stolidly merciless, and it hurled true to its mark the shaft of conviction. Out of the yesterday, Mary heard the voice of her father that was the voice of a society rigidly shaped by the conditions of its own fashioning:

"Bay 'un thirty year old an' noot another sin ag'in 'un, I would beat 'un within a bare inch o' 'er deeth, an' turn 'un oot to live the life 'un had picked fur herself!"

She understood that statement now.

"I can go to Max's," she hazarded.

"To—*where?*"

"To Max's father's."

"Maybe you can; but it's a long trip to Hungary."

Mary answered nothing. Rose had only confirmed what the girl had for an hour feared.

"You see how it is," pursued Rose, reading Mary's silence with a practiced mind. "Better let me take care of you."

Mary's face was hidden. Again she felt New York as a malevolent consciousness, a living prison implacably raising around her its insurmountable walls. There was, she thought, nothing left her but the diminishing hope of Max's return.

"Now you will eat, won't you?" Rose was continuing.

Mary shook her head.

Rose patted quietly one of the clenched hands that lay close to her.

"Better do it, dearie," she said. "I'm your friend; remember that. You can have whatever you want."

Mary mastered what strength remained to her. She raised herself on her elbow.

"Then let me go!" she pleaded, extending an open palm like a beggar asking for a crust. "I don't care if my clothes is mussed. I don't care what'll happen afterward. Just let me go!"

"You're a fool," Rose made cool rejoinder. "Where'd you go?"

"I don't know?"

"What'd become of you?"

"I don't care."

"Well, you would care, all right, all right. You can't go home, and you've no clothes and no money

and no references. You couldn't get work anywhere in New York, and you couldn't get away from New York."

"I——" Mary groped through the darkness of her soul. "I can do housework."

"Not without a reference you can't."

"I could go to some office——"

"If you went to any charity-joint, they'd throw you out because of what's happened to you."

"I could beg on the street if I had to."

"Do you think the men in this town give money for nothing to a good-looking girl? You could go *on* the street, that's what you could do."

The phrase was new to its hearer, but the tone explained it.

"Then," she stumbled forward, "I could go to the police. They'd help me. I could——"

But at that word Rose flew into a torrent of anger and abuse that dwarfed the former tempest.

"You could, could you?" she cried. "That's your game, is it, you sneaking little innocent? I'll bet you're a damn sight wiser than you let on. But you don't know this town: you can take that much from me. Go to the police! Go to 'em! The cops on this beat are my friends: if you don't believe it, I'll bring 'em in and introduce you. They're my friends, and so's the whole precinct my friends. Go to 'em! Go to 'em, and I'll have you pinched and locked up for bein' what you are!"

Mary had drawn away from the blast, but Rose's powerful fist caught her under the chin and sent her crashing down on the bed.

"You don't come that on me!" the jailer con-

tinued. " You've got your choice: you can stay here and live easy, or walk out and go to jail, and that's all you can do. Max ain't comin' back, and you always knew he wouldn't come back. You know what this house is as well as I do, and you've got to stay here and earn your keep. If you give one yip I'll have the cops in! You don't want to eat, hey? Well then, you shan't eat! You can lay there and starve, or you can knock on the door and get the best breakfast you ever had, all ready for you. Do what you please; but if you let out one yip I'll hammer the life out of you! "

She turned and left the room. She banged the door behind her, and Mary, in a swirling dream, heard herself again locked in her cell.

V.

THE BIRDS OF PREY

THROUGH all the days that immediately followed—the days that were nights, and the nights that were red noondays—a thousand horrors, from subtle word to recurring experience, conjoined to assure to Mary the reality of her servitude. All of that first day, after Rose had left her with the dark blood oozing from her cut chin upon the scented pillows, she lay, like a wounded dog, now in a faint and then in a stupor, on the disordered bed. As the sunlight shifted and the shadows lengthened in the room, torpor gave way to reawakened fear, and she crawled into a corner and tried to hide herself, trembling, with chattering teeth, at every sound of laughter that rose from the lower floors, at every footstep upon the stair.

Thrice Rose returned. Each time she bore a steaming dish that, as the girl's physical pain grew less, assailed the nostrils with increasing poignancy. Each time Mary shook her stubborn russet head. And each time the visit ended in a beating.

Escape by door or window was out of the question; to attempt to raise an alarm was to invite fresh violence; and gradually grew the certainty that the situation was genuinely as the jailer had described it: that the street was worse than the house, and that Mary was her own prisoner. She found the

bottle labeled "Poison," and bit one of the tablets, but she was young and afraid, and she spat the burning crumbs from her mouth. She did not dare to die, and when Rose came again to the room, her captive was too weak to refuse the broth that was fed her, as if she were a sick child, from a spoon.

"You're a dear girl, after all," said the mistress, as she administered the grateful food. "You do as I say and you won't never be sorry. All I want is to have you sensible. I'm your friend."

Mary said nothing: she was too weak to answer.

"And now," Rose pursued, "I'll just give you a drink."

And when she had come back, she had not come back alone.

The worst of prisons is that in which the door is so cunningly closed upon the inmate that, at last, after the brutality is familiar, the inmate seems originally to have closed it upon herself, and in such a fortress of pain Mary now found herself restrained. The process was simple. It was merely first to wound and then to inure. The descent to hell is not easy; it is red with blood and wet with tears; but hell itself must be endured.

It was not for some days that any woman save Rose came to Mary's cell and then, one afternoon, two women followed the grating key.

They were alike only as to clothes. Both wore loose negligé garments, but whereas the one was sturdy and German-blonde, with straw-colored hair, round and heavy face, blue eyes and peasant frame —a younger Rose—the other was wiry, compact, her brows low and dark under somber hair, her full

cheeks red only in defiance of a swarthy skin, her eyes black and her mouth vermillion. It was this one who, with an accent that a more sophisticated ear than Mary's would have placed along the Seine, was the first to speak.

" 'Ello! " she laughed, her teeth gleaming between her lips like pomegranate seeds. " We have come to make the call."

Without awaiting a reply, she jumped upon the bed, drew her feet beneath her, and produced and lit a cigarette. The German girl moved more slowly to the other side and there elaborately ensconced herself.

Mary looked at her visitors without immediately replying. She had not, in fact, the remotest idea of what was the fitting word.

But the French girl was unruffled by this silence. She flung her head back upon a white neck and sent a slow column of blue smoke curling toward the ceiling.

" My name," she explained, with an odd clipping of her speech, " eet ees Celeste, an' my good frien' here," she continued with an easy gesture of the cigarette, " she ees Fritzie—chust a bar-bar-ous German."

Mary looked at her with a gaze large and listless.

" An' you' name? " pursued Celeste, " eet ees—what? "

Fritzie supplied the answer, speaking in a ponderous contralto.

" Her name is Mary," said she.

" *Bien*—a pretty name," Celeste rattled on, precisely as if her unwilling entertainer had made the

response. "I like eet well; but"—and she studied with unobtrusive care the russet-framed, indignant face before her—"eet ees not so good as ees yourself. I t'ink—let me see—yaas: I t'ink I shall call you 'Violet.'—Violet, why you don't eat more een dees 'ouse?"

"I'm hardly ever hungry," said Mary.

"Not hongry?—Oh-h, but you mohst be hongry! Anyone so young mohst want to eat, and anyone so beautiful mohst eat so as not to loose the beauty.—Ees eet not so, Fritzie?"

The German girl smiled gently and nodded her blonde head.

"Ach, yes," she rumbled. "The liebchen!"

"No," insisted Mary. "I don't care about nothing. I have a headache all the time. I have one now."

Celeste jumped lightly to the floor: it was as if to uncoil her feet and to reach the door required but a single movement.

"*Un moment!*" she laughed. "I shall feex the *mal de tête* immediate!"

There was no time for remonstrance; the door closed upon her concluding word, and Mary was left there gazing into the stolid, sphinxlike face of the placidly smiling German. It was not a bad face, and soon Mary realized that it was a contented one.

Fritzie was returning her look with an equal curiosity.

"Are you vorried?" she finally inquired.

"No," lied Mary proudly.

"I dought you looked like vorried," the German continued. "Bud you should be nod. Dis iss a

goot place. Dere are loads vorse blaces in New York dan dis: I know 'em."

She paused, but Mary's lips remained closed, her eyes fixed.

"You bed I know 'um!" Fritzie repeated. "Bud dis blace—vhy, ve haf de best meals, so goot nobody gould besser haf! I like dis blace."

A faint question shot into Mary's face. At once Fritzie answered it.

"Dat's righd. Listen: I gome over here two year ago in de steerage. Some of de vomen, men meet dem—oh, most all de nod-family vons—un' took dem to dese here intelligence office dat are only fakes, un' sold dem, vidout dere knowin' nussin' of it, fur ten un' fifteen dollar' each. Bud I vas careful. I get a real tshob.—Ach, himmel!"

She waved a broad palm in disgust.

"Id vas bad enough in de steerage mit all de sailor-mens kissin' you to-day un' kickin' you to-morrow; bud dat tshob of mine, dat vas de real limit! I gome over here because I vouldn't vork in de fields back home, bud in dat boarding-house vhere I get dat tshob, I get up at dree o'clock every mornin', because some of de mens vork in Jefferson Market, un' I haf to scrub, un' make de beds, un' help cook, un' vait on dable, un' vash dishes, un' sweep de whole house oud. Un' den till late at nighd I haf to help cook, un' vait on dable, un' vash dishes some more still. Vhenever I am sick, or late, or break von dish, or a boarder don' pay, I gets docked. Un' almost every veek I'm sick or late or break a dish or a boarder don' pay. My vages is d'ree dollar a veek, un' I never gets more as two-fifty—sometime, two—

un' dat vill nod pay my clothes ad first, un' don' pay my doctor bills aftervard."

The story was told monotonously, without much show of emotion, but it was enough of itself to wring a word from the woman to whom it was addressed.

"You got sick?" asked Mary.

"Who vouldn't?" said Fritzie. "You bed I get sick, un' vhen I gome oud of de hospital, de young doctor—he'd been makin' grand lofe to me—he tell me I vas too nice a girl to vork my hands off fur nussin' a veek, un' he gif me his visitin' card vith a writin' on it to a voman he knowed, un' I quit un' vent dere."

She paused, but Mary was silent, and the German resumed:

"It vas a goot place, bud nod so goot as dis von. I stay a mont' till she move to Philadelphia. Den I vent to anozzer house, not so goot as dat first, fur two mont's till the voman die. Un' den, after some more, I gome here, pretty soon, to Miss Rose's. No"—she waved her thick hand toward the door through which Celeste had lately passed—"I'm nod like dat Frenchie. She's vhat Phil Beekman calls a 'gongenital,' vatever dat iss; I vork hard enough now, und I vanted to vork righd den; bud I tell you I could not stand it, dough I vas so strong. No, I'm glad I gome here."

She leaned back upon her elbow.

"Now, dis Celeste——" she began, but the French girl, just then entering, came with an air that was a sufficient explanation of her never complex temperament.

"*Voilà!*" she smiled, holding aloft a long glass

filled by a dull green liquid. "Let the leetle girl tak some of thees wheech I meex for her."

Before she had well realized what she was doing, Mary had accepted the glass.

"What is it?" she asked weakly.

"Absinthe," replied Celeste.

"It smells like licorice," said Mary.

"Ah, but no; eet ees not that. You try thees, an' then you can eat."

"But I don't think I want to eat."

"Poof! That ees folly! See, now, I meex thees myself—I myself have *frappé* eet. Ees eet what you call polite that you say 'no' to me? Say, now: ees eet?"

Involuntarily Mary smiled. It was a rueful little smile, but it was a smile of exhausted consent.

"It won't hurt me?"

"Thees? You do not know eet. Eet ees the enemy of all the headache, of all the heartache, of all the bad nerve."

For answer Mary drained the glass, and when her visitors left her they turned no key upon their exit.

So, slowly, through all those early days, and through the days that immediately followed them, the spell of the situation worked. There was infamy, there was torture. The unending procession of visitors—clerks, drummers, car-conductors, teamsters, gamesters, thieves, brothers in the fraternity of lust, equals in the night of horror, mostly drunken, nearly all unclean of body and everyone filthy of mind—the green government note was their certificate of qualification, the money, however acquired,

constituted their right to those counterfeits which the house of Rose Légère was maintained to sell. For that note, themselves the chattels of conditions, they might caress or beat; for that, they might take whatever their hearts demanded. Was the slave wounded? Was she ill? Was she heartbroken? She must smile; she must be one woman to all men. She must receive the blows with laughter, the ribaldry, the insults and the curses as wit. She must pass from this to that—and she must not care.

And yet Mary, who was Violet now, could do nothing but take as final the conclusion that Rose had drawn for her. To return home, even if she had the money, would be impossible, because to do so would be to court her father's anger and her mother's shame, with no hope of either pardon or justification. To go out into the cheerless street that sent its growling echoes up to her curtained window would be, she was assured, to deliver herself to arrest or starvation. She was ignorant and young. With no knowledge of the laws and the charities of the monster town, she saw only that the former, in uniform, was a back-door friend of her keepers, and she was told that the latter never helped before they first publicly burned upon their victims' brows the thenceforth ineradicable brand of infamy. Without there was, at the least, hunger, drudgery and disgrace; at the most, starvation, jail, death. Within, where fresh wounds meant but little, there obtained, under only a velvet-pawed tyranny, a tolerable democracy of disrepute, an equality of degradation, where food, at any rate, and shelter and raiment were certain, and where old scars and fresh bruises were

hidden from the world: the price was no more than supine acquiescence.

Anything like financial independence was, of course, impossible: the slaves of Rose Légère were as much slaves as any mutilated black man of the Congo, or any toil-cramped white man in a factory. Their wages were paid to the supervisor, their few belongings secretly searched for gratuities, and though one-half of each payment was, theoretically, the portion of the employé, rent and board and *lingerie* demanded, and must needs secure, prices that left each woman hopelessly in debt to the mistress of the house.

With her senses in revolt, the mind and body of the newly-christened Violet came, by insidious degrees, nevertheless to approach some likeness to adaptability. Her material wants never went unsupplied, and such intelligence as she possessed began to swing toward that point of view to differ from which could bring nothing save serious discomfort. To the hope of Max's return she still, in her own heart, clung with that tenacity which only a woman can exert upon an acknowledged impossibility, but she felt even this hope shrink between her clutching fingers, and, doing her best to reason, she knew that, even should the miracle happen, Max had brought her and left her here with the intent that she should fulfill her economic destiny.

Too dull to see deeply into causes, she could only accept the slowly numbing hail of effects. Until a few days since, she had been a child, and, like most children, the individual at fault in every personal catastrophe. It was thus that she began by blaming

herself for all that had now befallen her; it was only at moments of growth that she turned her anger first against her own parents, then against the active agent and finally against his principal, and it would be but after deeper vision and harder usage that she could see both herself and them, and the whole company that made them possible, as mere grist in the mill of a merciless machine.

And yet for a long time her one passion was the passion of release. Without clothes and money and protection she could understand no escape; but for these means she at last found courage to appeal to the one source from which she could conceive of their coming.

VI

AN ANGEL UNAWARES

THE man to whom she first spoke, in a stolen instant, descending the darkened stair, was a small shopkeeper, fat and pliable, beyond the age of violence, and, as he had just told her, a husband and the father of a girl of her own age.

"Listen," she said, with one trembling hand upon his shoulder, "I want you to do me a favor."

"Anything you say, Violet," he chuckled.

"Don't talk so loud, then. I—I want you to take me out of here."

The man looked at her, through the rosy twilight, in a flattered bewilderment.

"Like me as much as that, do you?" he sparred.

"You don't understand. Of course, I like you; but what I meant was——"

He interrupted her, his fat fingers complacently patting her cheek.

"It's not me that don't tumble to the facts," he said; "it's you. I told you I was a family man. I couldn't put you anywhere."

"I don't mean that. I mean——"

But again he cut in upon her labored explanation, his commercial mind traveling along lines in which it had been forced all his life to travel, and his pride entrenching itself behind the trivial rampart of his income.

"You girls!" he laughed, in palpable deception. "You all think I've got a lot of money. Why, there ain't no use thinkin' you can bleed me. I'm a business man, an' I do everything on a straight business basis, but I wouldn't rent a flat for the finest of you that ever walked Fourteenth Street."

Violet's answer was brief. That she should have given her confidence to such a beast, that such a beast should continue to thrive in the world that was closed to her, and that, her pitiable confidence once given, she should be so grossly misinterpreted—these things sent a red rage rushing to her now always incarnadined cheeks. She gave the shopkeeper a push that nearly sent him rolling to the foot of the stairs.

"Get away from me!" she whispered hoarsely. "Get away! I wouldn't have you for a gift!"

The man stumbled and gripped the rose-colored lamp upon the newel-post, which swayed, under his rocking weight, like a palm-tree in a storm. He gasped for breath, got it, and, shaking his fist upward through the shadows, began to bellow forth a storm of oaths that, for foulness, utterly outdid the ejaculations to which, from both sexes, Violet was already becoming accustomed.

"You come down here," he courageously shouted, "and I'll give you the worst beating you ever had in your life! Nice place, this is! I'll have it pinched —you see if I don't! You can't make an easy thing out o' me! You've robbed me, anyhow. You'll get what's comin' to you!"—And he ended with the single epithet to which those four walls were unaccustomed.

Rose ran out from the parlor.

"Shut up, you!" she commanded of the disturber, in a low tone that nevertheless compelled obedience. "What's the trouble, Violet?"

Violet leaned against the stair-wall, half-way up, her burning hands pressed to her burning face. She was mad with anger and shame, but she was also afraid.

"You heard him," she gasped.

"Yes," snapped the visitor, his voice uncontrollably resuming its former timbre, "and *you* heard me, too!"

The mistress is, of necessity, always, in a crisis, against the slave.

"Well," said Rose, "tell me what she done."

Violet, however, saw at once the necessity of changing the issue.

"He says he's been robbed!" she called down the stairs. And then she ran after her words, and stood under the lamp, facing them both, her arms extended, the flowing sleeves trembling with the emotion that they covered but could not conceal. "Search me!" she commanded. "If you think I took a cent of yours, search me!"

She was a vision that brought conviction with it.

Before the sputtering visitor could correct the situation, Rose had, perhaps against her will, been converted. She took the man's hat from the hall-rack at her side, put it on his head, opened the street-door, and gently propelled him through it.

"You're drunk," she said, "an' you'd better get out before I call the cop. There ain't no badger business in this house, an' don't you forget it!"

She shut the door, and turned calmly to Violet.

"How much did you get?" she asked.

"Why, Miss Rose, you know——"

"I mean what did you touch him for? You mustn't play that sort of game here: it gives the house a bad name. But just this once we'll divide up an' not say anything more about it."

Violet's eyes opened wide.

"I didn't steal a penny," she declared.

Rose regarded her with a softening countenance.

"Word of honor?" she asked.

"Word of honor," vowed Violet.

"All right, but even if you do touch them, you mustn't ever let them *think* you do. A man'll forgive you for hurtin' him anywhere but in his pocketbook.—You're all worked up, dearie. Come on out to the kitchen an' have a bottle of beer."

As they were pouring the drinks, a heavy foot sounded in the outside passageway and a careful four knocks followed upon the rear door.

"That's Larry," said Rose, and drew the bolt.

A policeman's hat was poked through the doorway, followed by a flushed, genial Irish face, and a tall, hulking body in regulation uniform.

"I'm terrible dry," grinned Larry.

"Then you've come to the right shop," was Rose's greeting. "We're just havin' a little drop ourselves. Larry, this is my new friend, Violet."

The policeman grinned again, and sat carefully upon the edge of a kitchen-chair, in evident fear that his bulk might prove too great for it.

"Glad to know you," he said.

"Larry's on this beat nights," Rose explained to

Violet, "an' him an' the lieutenant look after us—don't you, Riley?"

"Well, what use is a frind if he don't take care of yez, Miss Rose? We do the bist we can."

"I know that.—What'll it be, Larry? We're takin' beer, but there's wine on the ice if you want it."

"I'll just have a small drap of liquor, ma'am, please," said Riley.

Rose poured and handed to him a glass of whiskey.

"When you came by," she inquired, "did you see a fat man throwin' fits in our gutter?"

"Why, I did not. Have ye been afther havin' a rumpus the night?"

"Oh, no—only that fat little fellow that keeps the jewelry-store around the corner. He was drunk, an' I threw him out. If he tries to get gay, let me know, will you?"

"Of course I'll let ye know—an' here's to your very good health, ma'am an' miss.—But you may rist aisy; that there won't be no throuble."

"I know that: he's too scared of his wife.—Have another, won't you?"

The officer rose.

"No, thank ye kindly," he said. "I wanted but the drap, ma'am."

"And how are Mrs. Riley and the children?"

Larry's face became a web of smiling wrinkles.

"Grand," he said; "the auld woman's grand—you ought to see her in the new silk dress I bought 'er the day—all grane wid fancy trimmin's from Six' Avenoo. An' the kiddies is thrivin'. Cecilia'll soon be havin' to go to work an' help the family

funds, she's that sthrong and hearty, an' young Van Wyck is such a divil that the teacher throwed him out of school. He's licked all the b'ys in his class, an' I think he'll end as a champeen pug."

He went out, still smiling, and, as he did so, Violet saw Rose, after stooping hurriedly, place in his hands a yellow bill. As the door closed, there came into the younger woman's eyes the question that she would not have dared to ask.

"Yep," nodded Rose, "that's my week's pay for what they call protection."

"Isn't he afraid to take it?" Violet, thus encouraged, inquired.

"The man above him isn't afraid to take two-thirds of it," said Rose, "an' the best of it goes past him to the district boss—it's the regular system with the regular prices. Oh, no, he ain't afraid; an' if you ever tried to live on a copper's pay, you'd soon be afraid not to take it."

Violet, returning to the parlor, bit her lip: there was indeed small help to be had from the law.

Small help, either there or elsewhere. She turned, naturally, only to the seemingly more prosperous customers, but, even by them, she was met with smiling incredulity: her story was so hackneyed that it could not be true.

"It's all right enough to want to get out of here," said her sagest adviser, who at least paid her the rare compliment of credence; "but how are you going to live after you get out? You can't go home; you haven't got any trade; you can't cook; without a recommendation you can't get even a job at general housework or in a factory."

He was a quiet, middle-aged widower that said this, an infrequent visitor, a chief clerk in one of the departments of a large insurance company, with a reputation for liberal kindliness at Rose's and, in his own little world, a position of some influence.

"You get me out," said Violet, "an' I'll do the rest."

But here again the gate was barred against her. The clerk was burdened with a good name and a place of trust. He could risk neither the one nor the other. He was sorry, genuinely sorry—she saw that; but what could he do?

It was an evening or two later that she found her first pale ray of encouragement, and she found it in the person of Philip Beekman, that same young Beekman to whom Fritzie had casually referred.

Beekman described himself, with some accuracy, as a person of good family and bad morals. "We are getting so confounded poor," he used to say, "that I sometimes doubt the former; but I have constant visible evidence of the latter, and so I cling to that as the one sure thing in this uncertain life." Had he but seen the facts, he might well have considered his derelictions as the result of his parentage. At her divorce, his mother had been awarded the custody of her only child, and, now that she had remarried, Philip was forced to play that neither uncommon nor congenial rôle—the part of the young man with too little training to earn a living and too much ancestry to marry one.

"After all," he said, as he sat with Violet in the many-colored back parlor, a half-empty bottle between them, his usually pale face aglow, his gray

eyes filmy, and his black hair tumbled by the constant passage through it of his long, nervous fingers— "after all, you see, you and I are in the same boat. You can't get out because, if you do, the sharks will eat you, and I daren't get out because I can't swim."

Always haunted by the fear that, in some manner, her true story might reach her own town and her own people, Violet had told him only as much as she dared, and what she had said had moved his impulsive generosity.

"But anyway," he insisted, "you can do one thing that I can't."

She clutched at the straw.

"What's that?" she asked.

"You can get help from shore."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that if you'll write a letter home, I'll mail it."

She shook her head: the straw crumpled in her fingers.

"There's no use of that," she said.

"Of course there is. After all, your father's your father, you see, and I don't know a father that wouldn't help his daughter out of the sort of mess you've got into."

"I know one," said Violet, grimly.

"Not till you try him, you don't."

"Yes, I do. If you was in my place would your father——"

"Which father?" laughed Beekman. "My one won't have anything to do with me because I live with the other, and the other won't have anything to do

with me because I'm the son of his predecessor.—You take my advice and write home."

"I'd never get an answer."

She spoke in an even tone, but there was no mistaking the tragedy that underlay it.

Beekman looked at her and blinked queerly. He brought his fist down smartly among the jangling glasses.

"It's a rotten shame!" he said. "A dirty, rotten shame! Why, don't you know that that yid who got you into this makes a business of such things? Don't you know there's a whole army of them that do? I wish to the Lord I could do something, but there isn't a policeman or a magistrate in the city who'd listen to me—they know too well where they get the jam for their bread and butter—and I can't get a job for even myself, let alone you!"

She had not, however, heard his last sentence. Her blue eyes wide, she was hanging on his reference to Max.

"A business?" she repeated. "Do you mean that men make money—that way?"

"Of course I do." The film passed suddenly from Beekman's eyes, leaving them alert with purpose. "Look here," he said, "there is one thing I can do, and I don't know anything that I'd enjoy more: you give me that little kyke's name, and I'll push his face out of the back of his head!"

Then there happened a strange thing. She had long guessed and now she knew, but guessing or knowing, she would not believe. As much for her own sanity as for Max's safety, she lied.

"The name he gave me," she said, "wasn't his

right one. It wasn't even one he mostly used. And I never knew no other."

Beekman raised his hands in more than mock despair, and got up to go.

"Well," he declared, "I don't know what I can do for you. If I got into any scandal, it would punch the last hole in my meal-ticket."

Violet, who was becoming accustomed to such replies, smiled kindly.

"I don't want you to get into no trouble for me," she said.

"I know you don't, and I couldn't be any use if I did. But I'll promise you this: I'll keep my eyes open, and if anything does turn up, I'll be Johnny-on-the-spot, all right."

"Thank you," said Violet.

"And look here," pursued Beekman, "I know that it's all rot to expect you to walk out of here without friends or a job; I know that, unless you've got one or the other, you're just simply in jail here; but if I can't get you anything, there must be those who can. Why don't you talk to the coal-men, or the gas-inspectors, or—I tell you, I've seen that tow-headed Dutchman who leaves the beer here. He looks straight, and he stops at the door. Why don't you talk to him? He's the sort that would know of a job for—for——"

Beekman hesitated, blushing like a schoolboy.

"For my sort?" asked Violet. "Maybe he is. Thank you. Anyhow I'll see."

And she did see. When Beekman left her, pressing into her hand the last piece of money that he would have for a week, he gave her at the same time

so much of hope. Those who seemed rich could not help her; she would appeal to those who were poor.

She was up early and in the kitchen the next morning at the hour when she knew the brewery-wagon would stop outside, and she sent the ebon Cassie on an errand to the corner pharmacy. The maid had scarcely closed the door before Violet was summoned to open it to the German of whom Beekman had spoken.

Philip had observed well. The brewery's driver, who stood whistling in the areaway, was a short, stocky man with the neck and arms of a gladiator and the round, smiling face of a child. His blue overalls and dark cloth cap accentuated the fairness of his hair, and his round inquiring eyes were alive with continual good-humor. He had just piled a half-dozen cases of beer beside the doorway.

Violet, in her crimson kimona, took from the table the money that had been left for him.

"Good-morning," she said as she handed him the bills.

He accepted the money with his left hand and, with his right, raised his cap from his clustering curls. His lips ceased whistling, half regretfully.

"Goot-mornin'," he replied, smiling.

"Won't you come in and have a drink?" asked Violet, adopting Rose's form of salutation.

"No, t'ank you," the German shook his head. "I neffer trinks nussing bud beer."

"Well," said Violet, "we have lots of that now."

"Und I neffer trink dot till tinner."

There was an awkward pause. The German, not knowing how to leave without seeming rudeness, was

shifting his weight from one heavily shod foot to the other. The woman, uncertain how to say the words she wanted to say, remained with her hand upon the knob.

"You don't?" she awkwardly repeated.

"No, und so I t'ink—I t'ink I besser be goin'," he hurriedly concluded, and began to turn on his heel.

The necessity for quick action roused her.

"Wait," she said. And then, as he faced her again in mute wonder, she pressed another bill into his hand. "I want you to help me," she continued. "I want to get a job somewhere, and I don't want Miss Rose to know nothing about it."

He looked from the bill to her, still wondering.

"So-o?" he responded.

"Yes, I want work—some other kind of work—and I thought perhaps you might"—her voice faltered—"might know of some kind."

The German's mobile face underwent a quick change. First astonishment and then something not far removed from tears came into his childlike eyes. He crushed the bill in his big red fist.

"So-o?" he repeated.

"Yes, I—you understand that I must have friends or a job if I am to get away from here, and I thought you might know of something."

The German bobbed his curls.

"I know dot right vell," he said; "bud I don' know no tshob chust now."

Violet's face darkened.

"All right," she answered, "I only hoped maybe——"

"Look here, miss," the driver cut in with a note of ready feeling in his voice. "You mean all dot?"

"All what?"

"About geddin' ozzer—aboud a real tshob."

"If I had the clothes and a place I'd go this minute."

"Vell, den, listen. I've chust god a new blace; I'm goin' to be bar-tender ofer on Segond Avenue, bud I gan send back here if I hear anysing.—Your name?"

"Violet—just Miss Violet."

"All righd, Miss Violet, I know some more aboud dese blaces like dis dan you maybe t'ink, und I guess maybe I gan do somesing. Nex' Sunday I dake my girl to Coney, und den ve'll dalk sings ofer und ve'll see vhat Katie says."

In spite of the promised delay and the growing habit of doubt, Violet's face kindled.

"You're good," she said simply, "and I'll trust you."

"Oh, I make nussing," replied the German, smiling once more, "bud chust you vait: Katie gan fix it; she gan fix anysing."

Before Violet could reply, he had resumed his whistling and run down the alleyway; and she saw that he had tossed back her money on the topmost beercase.



VII

HOLIDAY

THAT Sunday morning in his single, dark, narrow room, Hermann Hoffmann, the erstwhile driver of a brewery-wagon and the coming Second Avenue barkeeper, arose with the dawn, just as if it had been a workday morning, and set about his elaborate toilet, whistling.

To the casual eye there would have seemed little in his surroundings to inspire any lyric joy. The cell-like apartment, which was the only spot on earth that Hermann might call his home, was a back room on the top floor of a damp and gloomy tenement in a filthy court running off Houston Street near Avenue A. Only at noon did the pale sunlight strain into that court, crowded all morning with malarious dogs and dirty, toddling babies solemnly, but vainly, trying to learn how to play, and echoing all through the black night now to the curses of scarred, slinking tiger-cats, now to the staggering footsteps or the brawling oaths of drunkards reeling homeward through the evil-smelling darkness, and again to the piercing cry of a woman in mortal agony or mortal fear.

Robbins's Row was no place for a policeman after nightfall, and scarcely a safer place for a stranger by day. From its sagging file of dirty, paper-patched windows, more or less feminine shapes leaned out,

calling gossip to their neighbors, and hauling at the pullied ropes that, crossing the street, spread above the pedestrians a tossing, parti-colored canopy of "wash." You entered it by climbing three rotting wooden steps, by stumbling through a wet hall, where a blue-burning gas-jet accentuated the sense of perpetual midnight, and you could reach the room of Hermann Hoffmann only by a perilous climb of six flights of stairs.

That room was as bare as any in the building. It looked out, by a single slit in the wall, upon a light-shaft, strangely misnamed. Its only furniture was a cot, a wooden-seated chair, a washstand, and, bearing comb and brushes and shaving-utensils, one of those pine bureaus the drawers of which may be opened in ten minutes, and closed, if you are lucky, in fifteen. Yet the note of the place was the note of order and of neatness; the bare floor was clean, and, against the fresh and brightly papered wall, there hung here a calico curtain that hid the tenant's wardrobe and there a single shelf bearing only, as if it were an altar consecrated to one holy object, a thumbed and dog's-eared copy of "Das Kapital."

Hermann plunged his ruddy face, whistling, into a bowl of water and drew it out, more ruddy and whistling still. Even the author of that portentous volume on the book-shelf used to sing "Strausbourg," and Hermann's single anthem was "Die Wacht Am Rhein."

Still pursuing that inspiring music, he turned to the bureau and began to shave the yellow down from his cheeks and chin. Thrust between the exaggerating mirror and its frame were two photographs—

the one, a trifle faded, of a matronly, kindly woman of his own race, perhaps fifty years old, stiffly arrayed in a silk dress rigorously American, and the other, a new one, that of a young girl in a great hat and unmistakably Manhattan dress, a young girl with a pretty, piquant face of that distinctively American type—the Irish. Perhaps these photographs distracted the German's attention; perhaps it was only that no man living can successfully whistle and shave at one and the same time. At any rate, his hand shook, and the razor cut a light gash in his upper lip.

He flung the offending blade from him, and it struck the mirror, cracking the glass across one corner.

"Ach, Gott," he smiled, as he staunched the blood with a heavy pressure through a rough towel; and then, in the English that he used even in his soliloquies: "Dey say now dot means bad luck fer seven year. Lucky is't dot I am not suberstitious!"

And then, undisturbed, he quietly resumed his whistling, finished shaving, sleeked down his rebellious tow-colored curls, got into a newly pressed brown suit and yellow shirt, donned a high collar and salmon tie, and, setting a carefully brushed derby upon his head, descended to the narrow street, the strains of "Die Wacht Am Rhein" lingering behind him through the darkened hallway.

To accomplish the purpose of his early rising, he took the Third Avenue elevated to the Forty-second Street station. There he bought two bouquets of carnations—one pink and the other white—and boarded a suburban train, which bore him, at last,

to one of those little stations that New York, which has so small time for remembrance, has selected for the hiding of its dead.

In the warm sunlight of the spring morning, Hermann picked his certain way among the green grass and the white-roofed habitations of the sleepers, until he came upon a little plot, by no means the cheapest or more obscure in the burying-ground, and there, his lips still pursed, but silent now, took off his shining derby and paused before the solitary white stone. With much that was unaffectedly reverent, he knelt, according to his weekly custom, and placed the white carnations on the grave, and with a great deal that was just as unaffectedly proud, he read, also according to that custom, the inscription cut upon the white stone that he had purchased with what, when he paid the bill, happened to be his last dollar:

Here In Peace
Lies The Body Of
WILHELMINA HOFFMANN,
Widow Of Ludwig Hoffmann,
Of Andernach, Rhenish Prussia,
Who Dep't'd This Life, Jan. 10, 1907.

"Wait thou, wait thou; soon thou shalt rest also."

The inscription was in English, but when he had finished reading it, the dead woman's son said, under his breath, the Lord's Prayer in the language of Luther, as she had taught it him.

"She liked me to pray," he shamefacedly explained to the circumambient atmosphere, as if prayer in any tongue were a compromise with his principles. "Und vhile I'm aboud it, I mighd as vell use de

old langwage. If the Herr Gott listens at all, He'd hear it some besser in de vay She said it."

And then he resumed his hat and his anthem, and returned to town.

Katie Flanagan was waiting for him as he came hurrying up the steps from the subway at Park Place—the piquant, pretty girl of the photograph, in black, because her parents had died not long since, but in black just as elaborate as her slender purse would permit, because she knew the full value of her raven hair and blossoming cheeks and tender eyes of Irish blue.

"Ach," gasped Hermann, "hof I kep' you a long time vaitin'?"

"Only about as long as you mostly do," she answered. Her voice was like her eyes, and she spoke with but the charming hint of a Galway brogue.

The German's cheeks burned with humiliation.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "I god up early to be on dime, bud de train vas lade from the cem't'ry in."

She understood and smiled.

"It's only five minutes I've been here," she confessed.

"Und I brought you a few bosies, Katie. I d'ought maybe——"

"Oh!" she seized the carnations with a laugh of delight, and buried her nose in them. "It's good y'are to think of such things, Hermann—and a bad lad that y'are to spend the money so!"

They were making their way toward the Bridge, the sturdy Hoffmann shouldering a passage through the momentarily swelling Sunday morning crowd.

"Dot liddle makes nussing," he proudly protested. "To-morrow I begin ad my new tshob."

"But that," said Katie, "won't pay you hardly wan dollar a week more'n the brewery did. I dunno, but I think——"

There, however, her protest, for the moment, ended. They were caught, clinging together, in the whirlpool of the entrance; carried nearly off their feet, rushed by the ticket-window with a quick exchange of small coin, and, a few minutes later, were battling their way among the press into a waiting Coney Island train.

In the last charge, Hermann, his lips puckered in the battle-hymn, did heroic service. While Katie hung tightly to one arm, he used manfully the elbow of the other; pushed a guard to the right; shoved two cigarette-smoking youths to the left; wriggled through the already crowded platform and shot into one of the coveted "cross-seats." Much of the park would not be open for a month or more to come, but New York was already clamoring for its playground.

Katie, flushed and triumphant, sank beside him, and busied herself with the task of straightening her big black hat. Hermann watched her in frank admiration as she sat there, her arms raised to her head, in that pose which, of all others, is the most becoming to her sex.

"What are you lookin' at?" she archly wondered, casting a smiling, sidelong, blue glance at him.

But before her the strong man was a timid child.

"Ad de brettiest bicture in a whole vorld," he stammered.

Katie laughed again.

"Och," she said in gratified disapproval, "there sure must be a Castle Blarney somewhere on the Rhine. What favor are you wantin' to ask me now, I wonder."

Once he had started, Hermann was too dogged thus to be retarded.

"It's chust de same old fafor," he pleaded, as, with a great creaking of brakes, the train began to swing upon the Bridge. "Now I god my new tshob, Katie, there gan't for nod hafin' our veddin' be no good reason, gan dere?"

"There's one," she said, still delighting in her coquetry; "there's one reason."

"Vat is 't?"

"Its name is Father Kelly."

"Katie, you von't led dot gount!"

"I will so."

"Und I haf to gome into your church, und—und all dem d'ings?"

"You do that."

Hermann squirmed; but he knew of old that from this point she was neither to be persuaded nor driven. It was a discussion that they had held many a time before, and every time she would give him no answer to his suit until he should surrender in this particular. Now, however, he considered himself about to set foot upon the highroad to prosperity, and the prosperous can ill afford to skimp magnanimity.

"*All* righd," he at last somewhat ruefully conceded, though with certain mental reservations into which it seemed then unnecessary to enter: "I'm a

strong von, und hof stood a lot a'ready, so I t'ink I gan stand dot too. I'll do it."

He took her by surprise.

"Promise?" she asked.

"Sure I bromise."

"No backin' out whatever happens?"

"No packin' oud."

"Well, God bless you then."

There was a catch in her voice as she said it. Into her lonely, hardworking life, this strong, soft-hearted, poor and cheerful German had brought about all the sunshine that she had latterly known, and she could think of nothing better than to give him the answer that he was so honestly anxious to hear. But, though he had become more and more to her from the first evening when he had seized her as she was falling from the platform of a surface-car that had started too quickly on its way, she had seen enough of the warfare with poverty in her own family to resolve that she would not marry until she could contribute her share to the wages of the resulting household, and now she had neither a position nor the immediate likelihood of obtaining one. It was hard, but she was used to hardship, and so, because she must not cry, she smiled.

Hermann tried to grasp her hand, but she easily eluded him.

"Den, vhen do ve say?" he eagerly demanded.

Much as it hurt her to hurt him, she laughed her answer:

"As soon as I get me fingers on a job that'll pay me six dollars a week, we'll have Father Kelly say the words for us."

"But Katie"—he used to say "Gatie" until she had teased him out of it—"you don' mean dot! You said—you dold me—you bromise——"

He floundered in the breakers of amazement. She turned her face away, and looked out of the window at the gigantic mockery of Liberty in the harbor; but she could not find it in her heart long to remain silent. She faced him once more.

"It's no use, Hermann," she said, her eyes very big and serious. "Here y'are goin' to Schleger's place with your first good chance at a way as'll lead you to somethin' worth workin' for—you said yourself it might end in a café o' your own—an' to get there you'll be needin' every blessed cent you can save. Do you think now I could look at meself in the glass mornin's if I married you an' kep' you down? No, thank God, I'm not so bad as that."

He sputtered toward a protest, but she waved him down.

"Now don't be tellin' me that two can live as cheap as one," she said. "I seen that pleasant lie nailed this many a year, an' I know more about housekeepin' in five minutes than you can learn in a lifetime. Things was plenty bad five years past, an' now they're worse yet. What rent is you know, an' what clothes is you can't even guess. Here's beefsteak at twenty-two cents the pound; veal up to thirty an' still goin' up. The papers make a fuss an' get the prices down three cents for three days, an' then the dealers put them up again when none's lookin'. An' as for eggs, you can pay seventy-five cents a dozen for them, winters, with the hour an' minute of the layin' stamped on them, if you're a

millionaire, or you can get nine for a quarter if you hold your nose."

The hopeful Hermann shook his blonde head.

"But Katie," he said, "I don' gare if I neffer ged a gafé off my own. I don' vant a gafé: I vant you."

She smiled again.

"You flatter me by the choice," she said; "but if we can get along without the drink, we can't get along without a bite to eat now an' then. No, Hermann-boy, it's no use, I'm tellin' you. I seen it tried. Me father swang a pick and me mother took in washin'—when she could get it—an' even then it wouldn't work: the one would have starved to death if the third rail hadn't got him, an' poor mother killed herself tryin' to keep her an' me. It won't work, an' I know it."

While the train hurried above the dead level of Brooklyn houses, out through the suburban monstrosities and across the dunes, the optimist, still an optimist, renewed his endeavors to find the chance for lodging his own arguments; but all the while Katie continued to overwhelm him with a flow of errors. They had almost reached the sandy island before Hermann, still stubbornly hopeful, elected to drop the subject for the present, and took up, in its stead, the story of Violet.

He spoke simply, which is to say forcibly, and he had an understanding, and therefore sympathetic, audience. Katie's face immediately softened.

"The poor child!" she murmured. "An' don't I know what it is? I've seen them go under, here one an' there another, hungry or overworked, every

mother's daughter of them. There was Molly Ryan, as good a girl as you'd find in a day's search of the parish, left alone with no one to put clothes on her back; an' pretty Agnes Donovan—out of work for four months—her as died in the City Hospital; an' Giulia Fortuni, whose father kept a fruit-stand by the Grand Street "L" station.—What can we do for her, Hermann-boy?"

"Dot's vat I vanted to ask you, Katie," said Hoffmann. "She has to hof friends und vork first of all."

"Friends she has right here; but work she must have whether or no. I begin me old search for meself in the mornin', an' I'll keep eye an' mouth ready to get a job for her."

Cynically hopeless and city-wise in regard to her own chances, Katie's Celtic soul warmed to something of Hermann's optimism in the cause of a sister. She began planning at once, and when the train drew up outside the tunnel-shed, she had the absent Violet established as a cloak-model in the big Lennox Department-Store, and engaged to marry a floor-walker.

And then Coney—Coney the sweetly reasonable in price and the extravagantly generous in provision—crowded out of her mind, for that day, all thoughts save the thought of itself.

A great many years ago—oh, a very great many years ago!—when you were a little boy, your father took you to the county-fair. You remember it, even yet, as a purple day in the glad calendar of your childhood: the blood cattle, the show of farm implements, the prize pumpkins, the side-shows with

their fat ladies and skeleton gentlemen, and the suave individual that put a bean under a cup and then, for a dollar, showed your shrewd parent that it was under another. But above all you remember the crowd. Never before had you seen so many people in one place, never realized that there were so many people in the world; and even now, out of the past, you can hear an awed voice saying:

"There are five thousand persons here."

Well, back home, the county-fair, thank heaven, continues to grow. Cattle are sleeker and pumpkins larger; the fat ladies weigh more and the thin gentlemen less; the shell-game, in one form or another, aids the progress of agriculture by making five dollars grow where only one grew before. But, in the meantime, the ugly, delightful "amusement-park" has brought the county-fair to the city-limit, and nearly three hundred thousand persons go to Coney Island every day.

Early in the season though they were, Katie and Hermann no sooner stepped upon that Surf Avenue which is at once the heart and the aorta of the Island, than they felt, as there they always felt, that they had entered upon the Land of Carnival. The broad, but crowded, way was dancing with the noise of festival, with the clangor of brass bands, the cries of venders, the smell of the circus, the tang of the sea.

Here, from mixed drinks to mixed music, went not the thugs and blacklegs, the pallid men and the painted women that would have filled such a place had it been within the borough of Manhattan. In their stead here drove the cars of generally stolid

people of business and leisure, and here, above all, walked the workers of the city, the weaker sex and the stronger, seeking holiday. The full-portion hat on the half-portion girl is as familiar to Surf Avenue as to the Waldorf palm-room; care is erased from the tablets of memory. On Coney there is no To-morrow.

The laughter of the hundreds of children rang out no more freely than did that of the thousands of their elders. Mothers with babies in their arms were young again. Stately blondes and languorous brunettes, gracefully seated on the wooden steeds of the score of merry-go-rounds, rode with a dignity unsurpassed in Hyde Park or the Bois, and never a cowboy at a round-up was more adventurous than the young East-Sider mounting a hired horse upon the Pony Track.

Every nook had something to sell, and Katie had her day's work in keeping Hermann from stopping at each booth. There were miles of scenic railways on all of which he wished to ride; there were scores of panorama that tempted him with pictures of every disaster from the San Francisco fire to the Messina earthquake. There were the familiar canes waiting to be caught with the familiar ring: there were the familiar chutes to be shot, and the familiar "galleries" where the rattle of rifles recalled the battle of the Yalu. Down on the beach an army was shouting in the surf, and on every hand along the jostling, good-natured street were peanuts and popcorn, "crispettes" and "hot dogs." Upon dozens of polished floors dancers were slowly revolving with a marvelous ability to distinguish between the time of

their own orchestra and that of the band in the café opposite, and everywhere were picture machines and machines that sang.

Cheap it doubtless was, but cheap also in the sense of small cost. Except in the larger cafés, the ordinary drinks sold at only five cents the glass, and the glasses were not an insult to the drinkers' capacity. Hermann and Katie had their beer at one of the smaller places. They dined for twenty-five cents apiece, without tips, at the "Home-Made-Lunch-Room"; they were twirled and buffeted in a swiftly revolving car down a series of precipitous canvas chasms, paying five cents apiece for the privilege of the shaking-up that, at home, Hermann would have resented with a blow; and they chose the last seat in the last car of a steep gravity railway, where a man must hold himself aboard with one arm and his shrieking sweetheart aboard with the other.

It was all blatant, all tawdry, all the apotheosis of the ridiculous, all essentially America-at-play; but when, at night, in the electric-train shooting through the warm darkness, the pair returned citywards, it was toward their own hard-earned and with difficulty retained places of shelter that they were going, like children after a strenuous holiday of make-believe with school to begin upon the morrow; and if, in most of the seats, as in that occupied by Katie and Hermann, girls slept with their heads resting frankly upon sleeping masculine shoulders, it was but a rest before conventional partings at home-doorways, the play-day ended for the lonely couch, and the work-day soon to begin.

VIII

MR. WESLEY DYKER

IN that company of the ignoble army of martyrs over which circumstances had given Rose Légère command, there were five members. Besides Mary, who now was Violet, Celeste, whom ancient conditions had temperamentally predetermined for such service, and Fritzie, who had chosen a partly moral slavery as less onerous than a wholly economic servitude, there was the highly colored Englishwoman Evelyn, who regarded her present station as one of the descending steps inevitable for everyone that set foot upon the way they all were treading, and Wanda, a dark little Russian Jewess, who, as soon as she had landed at the South Ferry from Ellis Island, had fallen into the hands of the slave-traders, and had thenceforward persistently striven upward to the place she now inhabited.

For the maintenance of her authority upon these and their patrons, Rose, unlike some of her fellows, did not have to depend upon the assistance of any man quartered in the house. To the discipline of the inmates her system of charge for clothes, food, and shelter was admirably suited; for the regulation of the visitors the generally nearby person of big Larry Riley, the policeman, amply sufficed. One other outsider seemed, however, to have a regular connection

with the establishment, and this person early excited Violet's curiosity.

Dressed in the extreme of fashion, as fashion is known from Fourteenth Street southward, his gray, almost white, suits always fresh from the pressing-iron, and his flowered tie and ever evident gay silk handkerchief always glaringly new, this dapper, dark young man was unmistakably Neapolitan. His glossy black hair clustered tight over his forehead; his brown skin shone as if rubbed with oil; his eyes danced like merry, but sinister, bits of coal, and his too red lips were continuously, loosely, patterned to a smile that was more nearly contemptuous than good-humored.

For at least a part of every evening this Italian, who always entered the house from the rear and without the formality of knocking, sat in the kitchen, drinking his beer with infinite leisure and, in the intervals of her discussions in the parlor, condescended to talk, lazily, with Rose.

"Who is he?" asked Violet, on what was perhaps the fifth of his visits that she had happened to observe.

Celeste, to whom the question had been addressed, shrugged her smooth shoulders.

"He ees Angel," she answered.

"He don't look like one."

"No, not mooch, but hees name, eet ees that: Rafael Angelelli. Eef he had the moostache, he would be almost 'andsome."

"Rose acts like she thought a good deal of him as he is."

"But why not?"—Celeste raised her heavy brows. "'e ees 'er sweed'eart."

"He is?" repeated Violet, who could not yet understand the masculine lover that would batten upon his conquest. "I notice he pretty nearly lives here, an' he never pays out a cent, an' never seems to work at anything, an' he always wears good clothes."

"My child, truly! That is the reason that I have tol' you: 'e ees 'er sweed'eart."

"Well, it's queer," said Violet, remembering another caller to whom, though he was a less frequent visitor, Rose was equally attentive. "I don't think he's half as nice as that fellow who comes here in a taxi—the one that always wears a dress-suit an' sits in the back parlor. He's a swell."

But at this Celeste grew enigmatic.

"Oh," she said, "that ees deeferent"—and would say no more.

Nevertheless, it happened, not long afterward, when the black Cassie was absent on her "evening out," that Violet, descending the back stair in unshod feet to steal from the ice-chest—as was her companions' custom—a quiet bottle of the beer that she had come to like, was brought to a palpitating stop by the sound, just then, of Rose's and Angel's voices from the kitchen but a few steps below her. The pair were plainly engaged in an important conversation, the woman hurried and frightened, the man cold and obdurate.

"Naw," said the Neapolitan; "I maka naw move out o' deesa house."

"But he's coming in now, I tell you," Rose almost

supplicated. "He'll be in the back-parlor in half a minute, an' I've got to go in an' talk to him."

"Olla righta; you go; I go alonga you."

"You can't do that; you know you can't. You know how things are without my tellin' you. What makes you so stubborn all of a sudden?"

"I don' lika dees Meesta Wesley Dyker."

"That's no reason why you should double-cross me."

"'E's too mucha de fina gentleman."

"I don't care what he is; you ought to know what I am. Do you want to tear up your own meal-ticket and throw down your easy money?"

"Easy mon'? You maka de joke!"

The woman's voice noticeably changed.

"Do you mean you want some more coin?" she asked.

The Italian did not answer.

"Because I won't give it to you," Rose continued, anger darting into her still cautiously lowered voice. "I know what you're doing with it. I know you had a girl from a department store out at shows twice last week, an' the second time she had a new dress on."

Somewhere in the front of the house a door closed heavily.

"'E's comin'," the Italian coolly commented. "Do you wanta that I go along in with you?"

As quickly as it had entered, all the anger fled from Rose's voice, and Violet, accustomed to it in command or at satisfied ease, was amazed now to hear it swaying between terror and genuine affection.

"I didn't mean it!" Rose pleaded. "I didn't

believe it when I heard it an' I don't believe it now. I know how much it costs a fellow to live. Here's another ten-spot. I—I—you know how I hate Dyker, and Angel, you know that I love you!"

The listener heard Angelelli rise and heard even his voice soften, though probably less with affection than with gratification.

"Now you talka lika de person witha gooda sense," he said. "Don' you listen to de beega lie no more. I lika you—nobody but only you. You are de gooda girl."

There was a whispered word more, and then the kitchen door was softly shut and Violet heard Rose, going into the next room, welcome that Wesley Dyker who, Violet had, to Celeste, so favorably compared with Angel.

The woman on the stairs hesitated. She wanted to pursue her eavesdropping, and she knew that she could regain her room, should the doorbell ring, before she was likely to be missed; but she was afraid that, in the maid's absence, Rose might return to the kitchen for a bottle of wine and discover her. Accordingly she waited the few minutes that were required for the first of such errands, and, those over, crept forward to the lighted keyhole, ready to retreat at the first intimation of danger.

She gave her eye precedence over her ear, and, as it chanced that Dyker was sitting directly in the limited shaft of her vision, she was enabled to get what was her first careful view of him.

A man but little beyond thirty, Wesley Dyker's face, which might once well have been handsome, was beginning to show that flaccid whiteness which

must later light to red and glow to purple. What his mouth might have told, a crisp, short, brown mustache concealed, but the regularity of his other features lost much of its effect because of eyes that, though large and steel gray, were heavy-lidded and calculating. Nevertheless, Violet's estimate of the man was not without justification. He spoke easily and well in the voice of education; his excellently made evening clothes displayed a figure that had not yet lost its admirable lines, and even the face—to one that either had known it during its gradual changes, or to one that lacked a fund of experience for purposes of comparison—was not wanting in attraction.

To the sturdy Rose, whose hand he held and who was looking at him with what she patently believed to be a tender expression, he was speaking with a certain formal politeness that was novel in the ears of the listener.

"You think you can get it?" Rose was asking.

"I think that I have something more than a fighting chance," replied Dyker.

"What does O'Malley say?"

"He is at least as liberal in his promise to me as he is in his promise to the other man."

"And the big chief doesn't yip?"

"My dear Rose, you should know, by this time, enough of New York politics to realize that the first qualification of a big boss is to hold his tongue, and that the present incumbent, whatever his other shortcomings, can always keep quiet as long as he has no pen in his hand."

Rose freed her hand to pour the wine.

"May I smoke?" asked Dyker.

"You always ask me that, and you always know you can."

He bowed and, drawing a cigarette from a plain gun-metal case, lighted it.

"Of course," he pursued, "I expect to win—I always expect to win, because failure may fight its way to a perch on any man's banner, but it's sure to lodge on the standard of the man that sits and waits for it. But I can't be sure of O'Malley."

"I guess whatever headquarters orders will go with him, all right."

"On the surface, perhaps; but, if he wants to, he can have his own candidate run on an independent ticket, and then he can quietly knife me at the polls."

"Would he have the nerve?"

"It is precisely what he did election before last. I am sure of that, and yet nobody has ever been able to prove it. That is where I look for your help."

Rose took his hand again, and pressed it reassuringly.

"I always take care of my friends," she smiled, "and you sure have been good to me. Where do I come in on this game?"

"Just yet you don't have to come in at all. It may be that everything will be honest and aboveboard—I trust it will—and in that case you need not disturb yourself."

"But if it ain't?"

"If it isn't,"—he looked at her kindly, but keenly, from under his heavy lids—"I shall want you to let me know just as soon as O'Malley begins to make preparations for registering voters from this house."

Rose bent forward and kissed him lightly on his flaccid cheek.

"That's easy," she laughed.

"Perhaps, but if you have to go so far at first, you will have to go farther afterward."

"An' now?"

"Just now I want you to keep your ears open for gossip. You are in a position to hear a lot; in this house men talk that are dumb outside."

"Who are you thinkin' of?"

"Several people, friends of O'Malley's. There's one cheap little camp-follower who, I am told, gets around here rather frequently. I don't suppose that he's of enough importance to know much, but he would be worth watching."

"What's his name?"

Dyker filled Rose's glass, and poured more wine for himself.

"Angelelli," he answered.

From the darkened kitchen, Violet, her eye now fast to the keyhole, drew a short breath, and watched Rose as the sophisticated spectator watches an emotional actress when she approaches her "big scene." But Rose, still the primitive Teuton of the brewery-calendar, never quavered.

"Rafael Angelelli?" she inquired.

"I think so. He is a little Italian loafer with no work and plenty of money. You know him, of course?"

"Sure I know him. He's in an' out of here all the time. We call him 'Angel'."

"Hum. Well, there are angels and angels, so that name may fit him as well as any other. There

may be nothing to it, but he does hang about O'Malley a good deal, and it might be worth your while to find out what, if anything, he knows."

"That's easy," purred Rose. "Here's success."

The pair clinked their glasses, and drained them.

"And—Rose?" began Dyker.

"Yes?"

"Neither this little fellow nor any of his crowd knows about—us?"

Rose's placid smile was eminently convincing.

"I guess I know my business," she said.

"I dare say you do. Only don't let him know that you know mine."

"Trust me for that, Wes' dear."

"Because, if O'Malley could get hold of it, he would have a rather formidable weapon."

"He doesn't know I ever set my lamps on you."

"Good," said Dyker; "and he mustn't know it for a good many months to come. Now, then, let's have just one pint more between us—only a pint—my dear—and——"

But the woman at the keyhole waited to hear no more.

IX

THE COURT OF A MERCHANT-PRINCE

WHEN that injudicious grasping of the third-rail had snuffed out the low, but stubborn, flame that a foreman had known as "Number 12," and a few score of human beings had called Michael Flanagan, his wife, Bridget, had looked up from her washtub long enough to refuse the offer of a hundred dollars, made by the company's claim-adjuster as full payment for whatever inconvenience she might have been occasioned by her husband's demise. One of those very modern young lawyers, whose livelihood depends upon their study of the newspapers, and the speed of their feet, had arrived at the Flanagan tenement ahead of the adjuster. He had accepted a contingent fee of ten dollars, and thereafter, being defeated by the company's expert attorneys in a lower court, refused, as usual, to appeal unless the widow handed him a further amount of money that was wholly beyond her reach. So Irish-eyed Katie was put to work, as she should in any case have been put, and Mrs. Flanagan went on with her washing.

The girl's first position was in a second-hand clothing shop on Sixth Avenue, where she went to work at eight in the morning and quit at half-past ten at night. The stock-in-trade of this place was largely revived ball-gowns and opera cloaks, bought, for

the most part, from women of so much means as to pretend, at least, that they never wore the same gown twice, and yet of too much thrift to give their discarded clothes to charity. Its patrons were persons that the original wearers of the gowns would have blushed to meet. And its proprietress was a little lynx-eyed, hook-nosed person whose sole object in life was to induce the former class to sell for less than they had intended and to persuade the latter class to buy for more than they could afford.

The virtue of this method she impressed, by precept and example, upon her six girl-clerks, and she raised their profits as they raised their prices of sale. She told, with a fine pride, how she had once so conducted a negotiation that a Riverside Drive husband had paid her nearly as much for a dress that he was buying for a Forty-seventh Street acquaintance as he had first paid for the same dress when it was made for his wife.

But, commissions to the contrary notwithstanding, neither Katie nor her companions could earn anything beyond a bare living wage. The lure of clothes was always before them; their work was the handling and the praising of beautiful fabrics beautifully arranged. They were told that they might themselves buy of these at what the proprietress called a mere nothing above the cost price, but what was really a considerable increase over it; they wanted to look their best among their friends, and their employer insisted that they look their best to her patrons; there was not one of the half-dozen clerks that was not continually from fifteen to a hundred dollars in her mistress's debt.

That Katie, like many another making the same fight, escaped further contamination, that the contrast between the oppression of the hook-nosed owner on the one hand and the apparent ease and luxury of her customers on the other, did not tempt her,—for opportunities were plenty,—from the station of clerk to purchaser, was due in part to her own sturdy character and to the accident of her own Celtic temper. Other girls there were who were not so destined, but Mrs. Flanagan's weary feet one day refused to support their possessor, and Katie, knowing well the need of ready money for the doctor and the druggist, neglected to purchase, even on credit, an expensive black walking-suit that was repeatedly called to her attention.

"Say, you'd look just grand in this," said the psittacidic proprietress, Mrs. Binks.

She held the dress extended, putting its best points to the light. And all the other clerks echoed:

"You'd look just grand in it, Miss Flanagan!"

"I would that," replied Katie, who was as taciturn to her employer as she was loquacious to everybody else.

"Why don't you take it?" asked Mrs. Binks.

"I don't just like it," lied Katie.

Mrs. Binks blinked her bead-like eyes. That the girl's reply could be true was inconceivable.

"Try it on," she suggested.

"Where's the use? I don't want it."

"Oh, try it on anyway."

"I'll be too busy, Mrs. Binks. The customers 're startin' to pour in this very minute."

"Then try it on at your lunch time. I'll leave it handy here, over this chair."

She did leave it there all day long. Katie, whose one dress was now, in spite of endless feminine makeshifts, beginning to show wear, had to go through her task with the baited hook constantly dangling before her. Nevertheless, when the long-delayed closing hour arrived, the suit was just where Mrs. Binks had left it. Katie carefully abstained from touching it; she would not even put it away.

"What's this?" asked the mildly surprised owner, as she stumbled over the garment. "I declare it's that handsome walking-suit I wanted you to have, Miss Flanagan."

Katie turned and regarded the neglected garment precisely as Mrs. Binks was regarding it.

"Well, well," she said, "and is it, now?"

Her mistress looked at her, again blinking suspiciously.

"Did you try it on?" she demanded.

"No."

"Why not?"

"I don't think I want it."

"It's a fine suit."

"It's grand."

"But you don't want it?"

"I don't think I do."

"I told you that you could have it for a third off."

"I know you did that, Mrs. Binks, and it's thank you I do for your kindness."

"Hum—hum. I'll take off a dollar more—for you."

"Thank you, no, Mrs. Binks. Good-night, Mrs. Binks."

This sort of thing went on, with variations, for three days, at the end of which time Mrs. Binks, as she would have phrased the occurrence, "came right out with it"; and for this ceremony she chose that morning hour when the other girls in the shop had the greatest amount of leisure to observe what happened.

"Miss Flanagan," said she, marching up to the thoroughly prepared Katie, and peering hard into the serene Irish eyes of her selected victim, "I like my clerks to look well."

"So I've been noticin'," said Katie.

"An' I don't like to speak about it when they don't," continued Mrs. Binks.

"You're just that tender-hearted!"

"But if you girls don't wear good clothes, my customers'll think I don't treat you right."

"How could they now, Mrs. Binks?"

"And," concluded Mrs. Binks, overlooking these interruptions in view of the crushing climax she was approaching, "as you've made up your mind not to take the hints I've been givin' you, or the fine offers I've made you, I've got to say it plainly that you're looking too shabby to work any more for me."

Katie smiled her warmest smile.

"Mrs. Binks," she replied, resorting again to prevarication, and presenting the greedily seized money that she still owed her employer, "I'd begun to be afraid that maybe them was your feelin's, an' so yesterd'y at lunch time I bought me the exact

duplicate of that walkin'-suit you've been tryin' to thrust upon me—only I got it next door an' for half your price."

Saying this she had walked to the shallow closet in the fitting-room, taken down her hat and coat, put them on, sung "Good-by" to her consternated fellow-workers, and strolled away forever from that place of employment. She went smiling, but, instead of the curt word that she generally employed, she administered a hand-slap with her open palm to a stranger that accosted her on her journey homeward.

She got work, after some searching, in a candy shop on Eighth Street, but this she had to relinquish when her mother's speedy illness developed into a brief and fatal disease. It was not until the last nursing, relieved by Hermann's assistance, and the funeral were over, that she could again think of labor, and then it was only to get, in a Fourth Street necktie factory, a small position that she lost because she had the effrontery to resent the rather frank overtures of the foreman.

Now, although she had told her cheerful lover nothing about it, she had come to the last ditch. She had been deceived by advertisements, cheated by employment agencies, denied work by the superintendents of scores of shops and manufactories. She was not a skilled laborer, and she had, at first, nothing in the matter of recommendation; she belonged to no trade union; the rent for her little room was dangerously overdue; so, also, were the bills of the baker and the milk dealer upon whom alone she was depending for food; all that she could pledge was in pawn, and, with the soles of her shoes worn

through almost to her feet, the elaborate mourning costume that she had been unable to resist was her only badge of material prosperity.

Two avenues of escape were open, were even persistently presented, yet she would regard neither. To take what Hermann pleaded with her to accept, though her hungry heart and her underfed body cried out for it, would have been, she felt well assured, unfairly to handicap her best friend, and, as for turning into that other way—a way into which the streets on every hand seemed so easily to open, she was too wise to consider.

"No thanks," she answered in her soul, as she walked by the leering satyrs, with her black head erect and her lips compressed—"not yet, if you please: not yet, nor never, I think, for starvin' seems some easier and a deal quicker, too."

She had to repeat the words pretty often, for they had come to be a sort of incantation, almost a pious ejaculation, against the enemy, and, as her poverty grew and her chances decreased in inverse ratio, the enemy, like vultures flocking to the fatally wounded, seemed startlingly to increase in force. At first it was a well-dressed corps strayed from Broadway or the Avenue; then it was the bank-clerk hurrying to work and the master mechanic hurrying from it; but finally, so plain are the signs of distress shown upon our faces by the selves that are besieged, it had become the professionally employing, professedly unemployed.

Yet at every dawn she renewed her quest, with a glass of blue milk and a bite of bread for breakfast. Every day and all day she tramped the long, aching

streets. And every night, despairing but resolute, she came home for her supper of bread and milk and for the sleep of the hungry and distressed.

It was now a Thursday morning. The milkman had pounded at her door and, receiving no answer, had left no milk. Still gnawing her crust, Katie slunk out of the tenement, and, at the step, was waylaid by the rent-collector, a little man with a sharp, white face that told plainly of his own struggle. He blocked the exit.

"Good-day to you, Miss Flanagan," he said, touching his dirty cap.

"Good-mornin', Mr. Woods," she answered, aware that the hour for the last engagement was approaching.

The man was one whose business forced him to mince nothing.

"I was comin' up to git yer rent," he continued. "It's three weeks overdue."

"I'm afraid I'll have to be askin' you to let it run a bit longer," said Katie, and her voice, in spite of all resolution, trembled.

"But I've been an' done that twice fer you, Miss Flanagan. The boss is after me as hard as I'm after you—an' harder."

"I know it. I—you can't stand him off another week, Mr. Woods?"

"Nix on the stand-off, miss."

"You see, I'm—I'm out of a job."

"I know that, but then you've been out o' one fer a good while now."

"Yes, only I rather expect—indeed, I've been promised one beginnin' to-morrow."

The little man coughed behind a dirty hand.

"That's Friday?" he asked.

"It is that."

"Well, ain't you got your dates mixed? You told me last week you had a job promised for that Friday."

Katie surprised even herself: she laughed.

"So I did!" she said. "An' of course I was lyin' an' of course you knowed it. Oh, well, Woods, man, hold 'em off for forty-eight hours, an' if I don't get work then, I'll—well, I won't bother you no more."

In the shadowy hallway, she felt his eyes studying her less with evil than with wonder.

"There ain't many girls with your looks, Miss Flanagan, as'd be out of a job as long as you've been."

Katie shrugged her shoulders: she was beyond resentment.

"The more pity to 'em," she said.

"Not many," repeated Mr. Woods.

There was an awkward silence. The collector paused because he wanted her fully to weigh an implication that he honestly considered to contain sound advice, and Katie refrained from further comment for the excellent reason that she had nothing to say. It was Woods that at last took up the broken thread.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Miss Flanagan," he not unkindly concluded; "I'll hold 'em off till tomorrow evenin', an' if by then you can pay me a chunk on account, it'll be all right; if you can't——"

He stood aside, and Katie clapped him warmly on the shoulder.

"You're doin' your best, Woods," she said, "an' I thank you for it. I'll get the job someways, but not the way you think, an'—an' I thank you."

Only half-way to the corner she met the girl that lived across the hall from her, Carrie Berkowicz, a homely, round-cheeked, brown-haired Lithuanian Jewess, who worked in a shirtwaist factory on Tenth Street.

"Say, Katie"—Carrie prided herself on her colloquial English, as she learned it in the night-classes in the Rand School—"were you still looking for a job?"

Katie nodded.

"Well, say, I just this minute passed Emma Schrem, an' she says Cora Costigan is quitting her job at the Lennox store to-day to be married to-morrow. Why don't you pull up there and try for it?"

Try for it? Katie could scarcely stop to thank her rescuer before she had turned northward. There was no longer left her even the five cents necessary for carfare, and, though she was faint with hunger and shaking with fear lest her tardiness should lose her this slim opportunity, she was forced to walk. Facing a fine rain blown in from the Sound, she walked up Second Avenue, and finally, turning westward to the shopping quarter now crowded with salesgirls on their hurried way to work, she entered, by the dark employés' door, the large department-store of Joshua N. Lennox, merchant and philanthropist.

A dozen quick inquiries rushed her, wet and weary, but flushed by her walk and radiant with the excite-

ment of the race, into the presence of the frock-coated, pale-faced, suave-mouthed Mr. Porter, the tall, thin man, with the precision of a surgeon and the gravity of a Sunday-school superintendent, to whose attention, it appeared, such pleas as hers must be brought. Mr. Porter, who had gray side-whiskers, which he stroked with white hands, listened in judicial calm to what she had to say.

"Just fill out this application-blank," he remarked as, breathless, Katie ended her little speech.

They were in a dim, bare office under the street, the man at a roll-top desk lighted by a green-shaded incandescent lamp, the girl standing beside him. Mr. Porter indicated a writing-shelf along the opposite wall, where Katie found a pile of the blanks, and pen and ink. While she struggled with the task assigned her, Mr. Porter verified, by brief, sharp inquiries through a telephone, her statement of the approaching marriage of Miss Cora Costigan.

Katie, meanwhile, was giving her age, her parentage, her birthplace, the name of the firm that had last employed her—she mentioned the candy-shop for that,—was cheerfully agreeing to join the "Employés' Mutual Benefit Association," and was putting a "Yes," which she intended promptly to forget, to the question that asked her to become a spy on her co-workers: "If you saw a fellow-employé doing anything detrimental to the interests of the firm, would you consider it your duty to report the same?" It was only at one of the last questions that she hesitated.

"Please what does that mean?" she asked.

Mr. Porter deigned to walk across the room and,

close to her shoulder, examined the question. It was the simple one: "Do you live with your parents?"

"That," said Mr. Porter, "is inserted because the firm wishes to have only nice girls here, and those with good home influences are considered—most trustworthy."

Mr. Porter had the type of emotionless eyes that can say one sort of thing far better than the eyes of more temperamental people, and he now met Katie's steady gaze with a stare of considerable significance.

Katie was rather sure that she understood.

"So that," she said, "if I didn't live with my people, I couldn't have the job?"

"So that," Mr. Porter corrected, "if a girl does get a position and lives with her family, she will be better cared for, and we will know that she is safe at home evenings."

Katie hesitated no longer. She took the pen and, opposite the query, wrote a quick "Yes." To be sure she was, on that account, obliged to invent the kind of work done by her father and the amount of the family wage; but she so needed the position that her active wit at once supplied the answers. More or less truthfully, she put a word in reply to the remaining questions, signed her name, and wrote her address.

Mr. Porter took the paper in his white fingers, read it slowly, folded it, indorsed it with several hieroglyphics, and placed it in a pigeon-hole.

"I am filing this with our other applications," he said. "As soon as your name is reached, I will see that you are notified."

Katie's jaw dropped.

"But I thought," she began, "I thought I was to get the job now. I—isn't Cora leavin', thin, after all?"

"Miss Costigan is leaving us, I understand," said Mr. Porter, stroking his whiskers; "but there are others—nearly a hundred—on the list ahead of you."

Katie was hungry, and hunger finds it hard to think of justice. She had borne all that she could bear. The waiting, the walking, the hope and the hopelessness had gnawed the string of her courage. Something snapped inside of her, and she began to sob with Irish unrestraint.

Mr. Porter was embarrassed. He frequently had to deal harshly with other employés of his philanthropic employer—it was, in fact, upon the performance of such duties that his living almost depended—but he did not like to have tears shed in his office: it did not look well for the reputation of the establishment.

"My dear Miss—Miss Flanagan," said he, first consulting the application-blank for the forgotten name, and putting one of his white hands toward the face now hidden in a crumpled handkerchief. "You mustn't—really, you must not!"

"But everything depends on me gettin' this job!" sobbed Katie in an Irish wail. "The rent's due; me family's all sick; the milkman won't leave no more milk, an' I've eaten nothin' for Heaven knows how long!"

In a rush of words her story, including that of her resurrected father, leaped from her. What effect it would have had upon Mr. Porter had it been

calmly told is beyond guessing; but it was told by no means calmly, and Katie's voice rose to a pitch that forced him to surrender out of mere fear of a prolonged scene. Grudgingly, but unconditionally, he laid down his arms. He took the telephone and called again Miss Isaacs, the buyer of the women's hosiery department, which Miss Costigan was to leave on the following day, told as much of Katie's story as he thought necessary, and obtained consent to a trial of the girl. He informed Katie that she might take, on the next morning, the place to be vacated by Miss Costigan, but he took care to impress upon her mind the fact that he was doing her an exceptional favor, which she was not to mention to her friends, who might try to profit by her unusual experience.

Katie was on the point of calling all the saints to bless him when she bethought her of a practical inquiry theretofore, in her eagerness to secure any sort of work, neglected.

"An' what's the pay?" she inquired.

"You will receive," replied Mr. Porter in the tones in which his employer announced the gift of a small fortune to a large college, "four dollars and fifty cents a week."

Katie forgot the saints.

"Four—" she began. "But, Mr. Porter," she concluded, "will you be tellin' me how I'm to be livin' on all that?"

Mr. Porter's calm eyes came again into significant play.

"You have said in your application, you may recall," he dryly remarked, as he reached for that

document, "you have said that you lived with your father."

For a moment her glance probed his.

"But for all that," she said, "I have to support meself entirely."

Mr. Porter was still looking at her with his emotionless, appraising gaze. He saw a girl with pretty, piquant features, with glossy black hair, with cheeks that bloomed even in privation and blue eyes that were beautiful even in tears.

"Miss Flanagan," said he, "most of the girls that start at these wages in department-stores are partly supported by their family or have some friend to help them out."

Katie flushed, but she kept her outward calm.

"An' what if they haven't got a friend?" she inquired.

Porter's cold eye never wavered.

"They find one," he said; "and I may add, Miss Flanagan, that you should experience no difficulty in that direction."

Poverty will do much for most of us. For Katie it succeeded in curbing a temper that, in better times, was never docile. Beggars, she reflected, cannot afford to look too closely into the source or significance of the alms they have asked. She swallowed her wrath.

"Will you advance one week's salary now?" she asked.

Mr. Porter was distinctly surprised.

"I—why, certainly I won't!" he stammered.

"Why not?"

"But, my dear Miss Flanagan, I have nothing

to do with the payment of the salaries. Besides, this firm doesn't know you; it does not even know that you will come to-morrow; it does not know that, if you do come, you will remain."

Katie smiled insidiously, and Katie smiling through her tear-curled lashes was insidious indeed.

"Och, now, Mr. Porter," she protested. "That's all well enough for the green girls; but you an' I know that you're the boss in matters of this sort. Lend me two an' a quarter."

Mr. Porter, pleased in spite of himself by her flattery, protested, but Katie remained unconvinced. She declared that she knew he was the real authority and that she could not bear to hear him underestimate himself. And the upshot of the discussion was that, though Mr. Porter could, in his official capacity, do nothing so unbusinesslike as to make her an advance, he would, personally, be glad to oblige her with a dollar and a half, and oblige her, adding a fatherly pat to her pink cheek, he ultimately did.

"Thanks," Katie responded as she took the money, and turned to go. "I'll report to-morrow, then, at a quarter of eight, Mr. Porter."

"At quarter to eight," repeated Mr. Porter, slowly closing the door behind her.

But, out in the wet street, Katie was saying what she had refrained from saying in the darkened office.

"An' as for the pay," she concluded, "I can't buy no automobiles with me loose change; but I think you'll find, you limb of Satan, that I can keep body an' soul together without a friend in the wor'rld!"

X

ANOTHER SPHERE

THAT same evening, his crisp brown mustache hiding the meaning of his mouth, and his drooping lids concealing the purpose of his steel-gray eyes, Wesley Dyker, from the rooms he had rented in an East Side Assembly district, took a cab northwestward through the rain to Riverside Drive. He was dressed precisely as he dressed to go to the house of Rose Légère, but he was bound for the house of Joshua Lennox.

There he had plainly been expected. The liveried, tight-lipped servant, who opened the iron grill-work door for him, showed him deferentially down a long tiled hall and into, not the formal white and gilt reception-room, but a comfortable, dimly-lighted apartment, a smoking-room, hung with fading mediæval tapestries, the floor covered with deep rugs of the Orient, and the chairs wide, broad-armed, and upholstered in soft leather.

"Miss Lennox will be down in a moment, sir," said the servant. "May I bring you anything, Mr. Dyker?"

Wesley shook his well-shaped head.

"No, thank you, Charles," he answered, and then, nodding to a decanter that, under a wide, soft-shaded lamp, stood upon a corner table: "Irish?" he asked.

Charles bowed, brought a tray, and, when Dyker

had poured the whiskey, added some seltzer, and lighted the cigarette that the guest had taken from a wrought silver box on a nearby tabouret.

"That is all, Charles," said Dyker, and the servant silently left him alone.

Wesley sank back in his chair with a sigh of comfort. He liked the house of the philanthropic merchant so well that he could have wished its master liked him better, and when, within a few minutes, the master himself chanced into the room, Dyker was prepared to be diplomatic.

Joshua N. Lennox was the explanation of that Mr. Porter who held so much power under him. The latter was tall and thin, the former short and compact, but there all physical differences ended: Mr. Porter had found his model in his employer. Here was the source of the seneschal's gray hair and side-whiskers, his trap mouth tortured to the line of benevolence, his calm gaze and his manner that combined the precision of the surgeon with the gravity of the head of a Sunday-school. Mr. Lennox, in fact, conducted the second largest Bible Class in New York. He knew its textbook from the first chapter of Genesis to the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation, and he believed in the literal inspiration of every verse of the original and of every syllable of the English translation.

It was in the voice in which he habitually addressed his Bible Class, the voice of one uttering a benediction, that he said:

"Good-evening, Mr. Dyker."

Wesley put down his glass and rose to his feet.

The man before him was the perfection of that

noble work of Heaven, a Prominent Citizen. Joshua Lennox endowed Bowery chapels with organs and meat-supplies; he contributed heavily to missions among the benighted Japanese; he assisted in arbitrating strikes wherein his fellow-employers were concerned; he always served on memorial committees; and he regularly subscribed to the campaign funds of all movements toward municipal political reform.

If his climbing wife insisted upon having liquor in the house, Mr. Lennox never touched it. If she served tobacco, he did not smoke. If she took in a Sunday paper, written and printed on Saturday, he would read no news until the appearance of the Monday journal merely written and printed on Sunday. And if his mercantile establishment sold poker-chips under the pseudonym of "counters," he was aware only that it did not sell playing-cards. The business he considered as his creation had grown beyond the limits of his power, and though, a good man and sincere, he might have done something by keeping a closer eye upon his work, he was in reality as much the creature of conditions as his worst-paid cash-boy. The great Frederick complained that a monarch could not know all the evil done in his kingdom: Joshua Lennox was so busy benefiting mankind that he had no leisure to observe in his own shop the state of affairs that made his philanthropy financially possible.

"I hope you are going with us to the opera, Mr. Lennox," said Dyker.

The old man shook his silvered head.

"No," said he in the slow, deliberate utterance

that he had acquired with his first million of dollars; "I am on my way farther down town than that."

"But you had better come," urged Wesley, knowing that refusal was certain. "This is the last performance of the season."

"On the contrary," the merchant chuckled kindly, "I think you had better let Marian go to the opera alone and come along with me. I am going to the first performance of a new season."

"Where's that?"

"To the Municipal Improvement Mass Meeting at Cooper Union."

That made it Dyker's turn to smile.

"Oh, but I couldn't do that," he said. "I'm on the other side, you know."

"Against good government?" The elder man manifestly enjoyed this mild thrust.

"Against irregularity, Mr. Lennox. There never has been and there never can be any lasting reform from the outside. We must clean our own houses. That is why I have moved to my present address. I believe in reform from within the party, and I believe that to effect this we want men of your sort to help us indoors and not to attack us from the street."

The merchant's cold eye looked hard at the speaker, but Dyker's lowered lids betrayed nothing.

"Yes," replied Lennox, dryly; "I heard that when Tammany Hall first came into power, but I have never seen any trace of reform from the inside. What I have seen is the spectacle of most of these inside reformers developing into leaders of the ma-

chine. If you will take an older man's advice, you will withdraw while there is yet time."

Wesley's reply sprang ready to his lips, but, before he could utter it, Marian Lennox came into the room.

Something of herself the girl received, no doubt, from her climbing mother; something, probably, from her satisfied father, and more than she guessed from a narrow environment. Nevertheless, four years at college had cultivated in her what seemed to be a spirit of independence, and a brief life in the city had confirmed in her what she was certain were opinions of her own.

She was tall and moved with assurance. Her full throat rose above the ermine of her cloak, supporting a delicately carved head, the head of a Greek cameo, held rigidly erect. The hair was a rich chestnut, the eyes large and brown, and the mouth at once firm and kindly. Her skin was very fair and her gloved hands long and slender.

She caught her father's concluding words.

"While there is yet time," she paraphrased, "Mr. Dyker will withdraw from this room and get me to the opera-house before the overture has ended. I am so unfashionable as to want my music entire."

She was used to commanding her parents in their own house, and she thought that she was used to commanding Wesley everywhere, so that she dismissed Lennox and secured Dyker's entrance into her waiting limousine with almost no delay whatever.

"There," she remarked as she settled herself com-

fortably for their drive; "I rather fancy that I rescued you from a sermon."

Dyker laughed shortly.

"Oh, I don't know," he said. "I esteem your father so much that I should like him to like me."

"But you think that he doesn't like you?"

"I think that he is slow to see that two persons may differ on a question of political tactics and yet remain, both of them, honest men."

"And may they?" bantered Marian.

"Well," he lightly accepted the challenge, "I shall take the specific case. There is no doubting your father's sincerity; there is no doubting the sincerity of nearly all the men that will, with him, to-night try to launch another of these municipal-reform parties which, if they ever get started at all, are sure to run on the rocks at last."

"And on the other hand," said the girl, "I suppose I must generously refuse to doubt the sincerity of Tammany Hall?"

"On the other hand you must justly refuse to doubt the sincerity of a few young men who have seen that reform-parties always end in violent reaction within the city and, if briefly successful, weaken the party in the next national campaign. You must refuse to doubt the sincerity of these young men when they go into the heart of the East Side to live and work among the people that make up the organization's fighting-strength. You must believe in them when they try to get nominated for even the smallest offices on the machine-ticket. And you must have faith that, if they can work themselves at last into places of power, they will reform

the party in the only way that will keep it reformed."

"Dear me," sighed Marian, "it seems that it was father that I rescued from a sermon."

"Well," said Dyker, "you asked me why your father and I should not mistrust each other, and there you have the reason. You know what I am trying to do; I have told you my plans as I haven't told them to another human being—and you should know that I am not to be suspected."

There was a ring in his voice that touched her.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I beg you'll forgive me. Only really, you know, you can't expect father to be with you: he would have to break the habit of a lifetime."

"I don't ask him to be with me; I only ask him to believe that a man can work with the organization and yet have pure principles."

"He can't even go so far as that; he says that every system is the reflection of the men that make it, and he says that the system you support battens on horrors."

"But it can't be the system. The horrors existed long before the system. Is he such a conservative as not to be able to see that?"

"He isn't a conservative; he is the one unprogressive thing in nature: the liberal of a preceding generation. Only the other day I mentioned something I have been thinking about doing—something that several of my most conventional friends have been doing for ever so long—and he was so dreadfully shocked that, though I'm now resolved upon my course, I can't guess how he'll take it."

Dyker's curiosity was easily piqued.

"If you proposed it," he said, "I can't imagine that it was such a very terrible thing."

"Oh, no; it was merely that I want to be of some use in the world and so have made up my mind to go in for settlement-work."

Wesley Dyker was one of those rare animals, a human being whose parents, though they could have arranged it otherwise, permitted him to be born in New York. He had been reared, at least during the winters of his earlier life, within the Borough of Manhattan, and his views were, like those of most of his even less acclimated neighbors, just as wide as that narrow island, and no wider. Indeed, so far as were concerned his views of the proper sphere of his own womankind, he limited them entirely to an extremely small portion of the city.

"Of course you're joking," he said.

"I am in cold earnest," she assured him.

"But that's absurd. You've—why you don't know what settlement-work means!"

"I know quite well what it means," said Marian. "I have friends engaged in it, as I told you, and I've been visiting them and seeing their life at close quarters."

"And you really mean——"

"I really mean that here we are at the Metropolitan, and that we can't talk on our way upstairs, and we won't talk while there is music to listen to."

Slowly their car had taken its grudged place in a long procession of its fellows, one by one unloading the human freight before the brilliantly lighted doorway. The pavement and the steps were a toss-

ing sea of silk hats, colored scarfs, and glittering headdresses. Into this they plunged, hurried to the crowded elevator, traversed a lighted corridor, passed through a short, dark passage and came out to the Lennox box in the great, glaring horseshoe of the opera-house.

Dyker, baffled by the sudden stop that had been put to his protests, looked moodily upon the familiar picture. Below them, climbing to the rail behind which was massed the orchestra, was the pit, white bosoms and bare shoulders, too distant to present, to the unassisted eye, any hint of individuality. Above rose the teeming galleries, line above line of peering faces. And to right and left swept the great curve of the boxes splendid with lace and feathers and jewels.

He saw no more than that during the entire performance and, as Marian, even in the *entr'actes*, would talk of nothing but the music to which he had refused to listen, he heard less. The opera was "Lucia," and as Wesley, with a taste worthy of a more discerning critic, considered that work nothing but a display of vocal gymnastics devised for a throat abnormally developed, he would probably have been, in any case, bored.

His father, who had what his friends called "family," had married what everybody called "money," but had managed to invest that commodity with a talent for choosing failures, and, when both parents had died, Wesley, fresh from the Columbia Law School, had amazedly found himself in a position where he would actually have to turn his education to practical account. For five years he

held a thankless, underpaid and unmentioned partnership in a well-known firm of corporation-lawyers. He drew their briefs, and developed a genuine talent for the task, but he was never given a chance to plead. The worm of necessity spun its cocoon in his brain, but the emerging butterfly of ambition could find no way to liberty.

One day, however, he was commissioned to prepare the case in defense of a large contractor, quite justly accused of fraud. It happened that, when the young lawyer brought the results of his week's work to his chief, the client in whose interests the work had been done was closeted with the head of the firm, and, Dyker being presented, that contractor learned of Wesley's service. At the ensuing trial the client was acquitted, and remembered the service. He lived on the East Side and made most of his money from political jobs. The rest followed simply enough. Dyker was introduced to the powers of his patron's district, and, thinking that he saw here the opportunity of which he had begun to despair, he had left his former employers and was already shouldering his way forward among his new friends. His former acquaintances mildly wondered what the devil he was after; his latter ones began to regard him as a clever fellow, and the newspapers printed stories of him as a young society man that gratuitously gave his legal talents to the help of the poor.

For his own part, Dyker was quite certain of what he was and of what he would be. He had seen, beneath his lowered lids, that a clever man could gain both fortune and power through political prestige, and he meant to use that means to his end.

He had also, while still with the firm of corporation-lawyers, been presented to Marian Lennox by her opportunely-met, socially-aspiring mother, and was, whatever his relation with other members of her sex, quite as much in love with her as he could be with anybody. Realizing the power of her father's fortune and the beauty of the girl herself, he had determined to marry her with as little delay as possible.

Until to-night he had delayed all open pursuit, because there had not been lacking signs to free him from fear of all male rivals; but that Marian should thus suddenly develop a purpose in life meant that he was to have a rival of a far more formidable sort. He set his teeth under his crisp mustache, folded his arms across his heart, and sat stolidly through the interminable opera: as soon as it was over, he meant to play his first lead.

He did play it—played it as soon as their car had crept up in answer to its electric-call and whisked them away into the night. As they shot up the flaming street, her clean-cut profile was almost as distinct as it had been in the box, and the girl, still thrilling with the memory of the music she so passionately loved, was close to the mood best suited to his own.

"May I talk now?" he asked ruefully.

She smiled.

"You mean to ask if you may argue," she answered. "No, you may not argue against my determination, and I am a good deal surprised that a man of your sort should want to."

"I don't intend to argue," he protested, leaning

the merest trifle toward her. "I mean only to ask you if your determination is quite fixed."

She bowed her splendid head.

"Quite fixed," she said.

"So that argument would not shake it?"

"So that no argument could shake it."

"Nor any persuasion?"

His voice had sunk only a semi-tone, but her feminine ear noted the change.

"Nor any persuasion," she replied.

"Then suppose I presented to you neither argument nor persuasion, but a condition?"

"But there is no conceivable condition that could arise to change me. You refuse to understand that I see this thing as a duty."

A lamp stronger than its fellows threw a quick ray full upon her face; her brown eyes were charmingly serious, her lips dangerously sweet.

"What I understand," responded Dyker, "is that there is one situation in which a woman may find herself where there arises a duty that crowds all others from the board."

His hand, in the semi-darkness, sought and found her own, its glove withdrawn, cool and firm and unretreating.

"You know the situation I mean," he said. "I love you. I love you so much, Marian, that I am jealous of any work that would take you from me; I want so much of your love that I can spare none of it—none even for the poor and suffering."

In that tight grasp her hand fluttered a little, but she did not answer: she could not answer, because, while her brain was telling her that a love so rapa-

cious was necessarily niggardly, her heart was crying out that this was the love it wanted most of all.

"Marian"—his voice shook now with the emotion that was tugging at its leash—"you've known for some months that I loved you; all last winter you must have seen this coming; you can't be unprepared to answer me!"

He possessed himself of her other hand, and pressed her inert palms between his own.

But the girl's determination loomed large to her. Through her entire life she had been shut away from the real world, behind rich curtains and amid soft lights, until, fired with the unrest of a partial education, she had chanced upon a glimpse of classmates working in what they called the slums, and now, with all the enthusiasm of youth, she had resolved to join them. A maturer woman would not have taken so seriously a sudden impulse to engage in work for which she had no training, but Marian was young.

"I am not unprepared," she answered. "I did know. But I know too that there are things that can make even love a finer, a better emotion."

The words reminded her of some speech she had once heard in a play, and, entirely in earnest as she was, the sound of them from her own lips strengthened her. She was in love with Wesley Dyker, but she was more in love with renunciation.

The man, however, shook his head.

"No," he said, "love is something ultimate. You can't paint the lily; you can't part it and share it; you must either cherish it or kill it. Which do you mean to do?"

The car had turned into the smoother way of Riverside Drive, where the lights are far fewer and less bright than Broadway's. He could not see her face, but he could not doubt the resolve that was in her voice as she answered:

"I mean to take up the work that I have told you of."

"But that's folly, Marian!"

He had chosen the wrong term of description, and, the moment he uttered it, he knew that he had erred. "Folly" is the word that youth most resents.

Marian withdrew her hands.

"It is strange," she said, "to hear you, of all men, laugh at an attempt to help the poor."

"I am not laughing; I'm too serious to laugh. I am so serious that I can't pick and choose phrases. I meant only that you can't help these people without training——"

"I can get training."

"Without knowing them?"

"The only way to know them is to go to them."

"But even then, you can do so little. These settlements accomplish practically nothing. They are fads for the people that run them and playthings for the people they are intended to help. I can speak with authority, and I tell you that the young men and women, the boys and girls, that go to them, drop in only when they have nothing else to do, and all the rest of the time go their own ways."

He forgot that he had said he would not argue. He used all his power to convince and to persuade; but if there is one human being that cannot be moved from a purpose, it is a young girl with a romantic

ideal, smarting under what she conceives to be ridicule, and for the first time tasting what she believes to be the bitter-sweets of sacrifice. Even when the verbal war had been carried into her own house, he could bring no concession from her. If he was helping his neighbors, then he should be all the more anxious that she, as the woman he wanted to be his wife, should have precisely the experience that the settlement would supply her.

"Then you mean," he asked, "that you do care—that you care at least a little?"

He put out his hands, but she did not seem to see them.

"I mean," she answered, "that we must wait."

XI

UNDER THE LASH

IT was on the day following her eavesdropping upon Rose that Violet was awakened early—as early as eleven o'clock in the morning—by a sudden cry. The sound was one of some pain and more terror, beginning in the high note of horrified amazement and ending in an attenuating moan of despair.

Violet had been living in a highly charged atmosphere: she sat up in bed, sleep immediately banished from her brain. She remained still and listened. She heard Rose's now familiar footstep. She heard a door open and close. She heard that cry frightfully begin again, and then she heard it more frightfully stop in mid-power, cease in abrupt and hideous silence.

There came a discreet tapping at her own door.

"Are you alone, my dear?"

It was the deep, contralto voice of English Evelyn, and, as Violet replied in the affirmative, the woman softly entered.

Her tall, almost thin, figure was draped in a soiled pink kimona; her yellow hair seemed merely to have been tossed upon her head and to have been left precisely as it happened to alight; her blue eyes were dull, and her hard, narrow face, with its spots of high color over the cheek-bones, showed more

plainly than common, the usually faint little red veins that lay close below its white skin.

"My Gawd," she sighed, as she sank upon the bed and curled up at its foot, "there are some things I can't get accustomed to, and that"—she nodded in the direction whence the cry had come—"that's one of them."

She spoke in a weary voice, a voice with almost no animation, but with a curious mixture of the cockney of the New Yorker and with a rising inflection that saved what she said from monotony.

"What was it?" asked Violet.

"You ought to know. It was another of them."

"You mean——" The question trailed into nothingness on Violet's whitening lips.

"Yes," said Evelyn, seizing a pillow and snuggling her broad shoulders against it. "Got a cig?" And then, as her hostess produced a box from under the mattress: "It does so get upon my nerves. Why, sometimes they come here young enough to play with dollies. This time there was no more sleep for boiby. Had to run downstairs and rig a B. and S., and then come up to girlie here for company."

"How—how did this happen?"

"How the deuce do you suppose? One story is pretty much all of them, my dear, and one about as narsty as the others."

"But this?"

"Oh, this broke me up just because I had the bad luck to hear the details, though I must say I've heard the same details often enough before. Her people lived in a tenement in Essex Street, where it's so crowded that the men have to come outside

every evening while their wives cook the dinners—three nine-by-seven rooms, no barth and no privacy; four children from eighteen to ten in one room; pa, ma, the boiby, and the seven-year-old in the second, and the cot in the kitchen-living-room rented to the lodger. The lodger was the wiggly snake under the apple-tree."

"He brought her here?"

"Gave her, as you might say, the general directions. But she'd have come along of her own self sometime."

"How could she?"

"How couldn't she, you mean! Those tenements are not for living in—there isn't room for that—they're just to eat in, when you've got enough, and sleep in, when you can sleep, and die in, when you have to."

"So this girl had to live outside?"

"On the doorsteps and the roofs when it was hot, and walking up and down the street when it wasn't."

Violet remembered her own home, and reflected that her excuse was less, because her surroundings had been better.

"That must have been pretty bad," she said.

"It was bad, but it wasn't so bad as being indoors, my dear. That's what most girls think about it anyway, and that's why they never go home before ten or eleven. How else do the moving-picture shows keep running and how else do the dance-halls make their cakes and ale?"

"The dance-halls?" The word was new to Violet.

"Yes, my dear, I said the dance-halls—where you pay five cents to dance in the dust, with the windows nailed fast to start a thirst, and then buy you bad beer of the kind proprietor. That's where the lodger took this girl, and that's where she learned to drink."

"Too much?"

"Chuck it, dearie, chuck it. Among all the wasters I've known, I've never found one drunkard: they all called themselves moderate drinkers. Well, this girlie played double for a bit, and then met a nice young man that wanted to marry her next day. She woke up here."

"Did they drug her?"

"Did they drug you? They don't have to drug you: you know that. The minute a girl tells me she was drugged, I say to myself: 'You're the kind that walk in and won't take "No" for an answer.' No, you catch flies with syrup; you don't shoot them with machine-guns. Narsty business, no?"

Violet was hearing for the first time how life made the net in which it had taken her. She passed her hand across her burning eyes.

"You seem to have seen a lot," she said.

"Haven't I just? I had my own little flat—to myself, too—once upon a time, and I kept my eyes about me. There was the Dago woman that owned a fruit-stand on my corner. She lived in an alley off Houston Street, and had a sixteen-year-old daughter who worked twelve hours a day rolling cigarettes. —Chuck me another, there's a good girlie. Thanks, awfully.—That girl hated her work—can you blame her?—met a man that told her she wouldn't have to work any more, and good-by."

"She went with him?"

"Parsed out of sight completely, my dear. Mother nearly crazy. Went to the police. Police added the girlie's name to their three columns of other missing girls for that year, and said they couldn't guess where she was. An uncle tried to go on an inspection-tour of his own, and had spent about all the family cash when he got to a flat on West Fortieth Street and had its girls in for the usual drinks. He saw his niece, but the bouncer knocked him down, and when he woke up in the arey, the happy family had moved."

"And that was all?"

"That was all till, some two years later, the girl sent for her mother to come to Bellevue to see her die. As soon as she was used up, they'd turned her out without one of the pennies she had earned for them.—Narsty, eh?"

There was a brief pause.

"I guess," said Violet, "there ain't much chance for you unless you're good."

"My dear," answered the Englishwoman, "if you're good, you haven't a chance at all. It's just a question of whether you have or haven't enough to live on. The best guardian of a man's virtue is the worst enemy of a woman's—and that's an empty pocketbook, my dear."

But Violet was in no mind for generalizations.

"It's a business, then, ain't it?" she asked.

"A regular business," nodded Evelyn,—"fifty cents up—and now that they've smashed the lotteries, policy, and the races, it's more of a business than ever. There are hundreds of young chaps all over

the country who make their living by selling girls to places like this—and worse than this; and there are more who make better livings by making one, or two, or even three girls walk the street for them. Just now, in New York, the street's the main thing."

"An' people like Miss Rose——?"

"They buy the girls and pay a percentage on their work, my dear, till the debt's cleared. Sometimes they give their girls nothing but brass checks for every job, but whether we get brass checks or real cash, it's all the same: board and lodging and clothes are so high that we never get out of debt to the madam. Trust her for that!"

She had a thorough knowledge of her subject, and she ran on as if her only interest in it were economic. She talked of Denver, with its two-room houses in which the front seemed one large window where the sole inmate displayed her wares; of Chicago with the curtained doors through which was thrust only a hand to receive the varying price of admission, even a quarter of a dollar occasionally sufficing; of the same city's infamous club maintained by politicians for their own debauches. She told of the proprietresses making a specialty of "sending out" for girls that worked at other and ill-paid tasks by day; of women conducting flats on a partnership basis; of those who rented, for high prices, houses that would otherwise be tenantless because of poor conditions or the opening of some street that must soon be cut through the premises. She said that young girls unsoiled would sometimes fetch their owners fifty dollars for their initial de-

struction, but that, as a rule, the sums were relatively small.

"And Miss Rose has to pay the police," asked Violet; "don't she?"

"She does just, little innocent. And the police have to pay the officers above them, and the officers above them have to pay the ward-bosses above *them* —and there you are. It's all the worse since the bosses can't make any money from gambling-houses, and it's all the worse since the business got organized and meant votes for the gang at every election. —"Oh," Evelyn broke off—"I tell you it's the same in every city the world over, my dear, and you and I haven't even the comfort of being exceptions."

"Don't people know about it?"

"People don't want to know about it. People don't want to feel badly. People say that it isn't true, and that, if it is true, it isn't fit to mention."

"Did you ever go to a dance-hall?"

Forgetting her recent attitude of democracy, Evelyn raised her pointed chin.

"I should say not," she answered. "Only a year ago I had that apartment of my very own. An Africander took me out of the chorus at the 'Gaiety' over home,—and a good job, too—and, when he died and I came here, one of the best doctors in this town took care of me. He said he was going to marry me," she ended with a short laugh, "but when his old wife died, he forgot that, and forgot me, and married a society girl young enough to be his grandchild. Of course he died himself after a few months, but that didn't help me, my dear: I

had to strike out, and now, from the best places I've come down as far as this."

Violet was still too young to feel keenly for another while herself in suffering, a fact that must have presented itself to Evelyn, because she turned from her own story with an easy shrug.

"After all," she pursued, "the thing's at least better run now that it has become a men's business. There are no jobs left at the top except the running of the houses: the men get the girls, the rents, and most of the profits."

"Fritzie said they got lots of immigrants."

"Well, rather. Most of the Dago ditch-diggers go home every winter, and any one of them will bring a girl back with him as his wife if you'll pay him a little over the price of the passage money. That's one way, but there are a jolly lot more, not to mention the make-believe employment agencies that catch the girls by regiments. The women are packed over here in the steerage like cattle, my dear, and ticketed like low-class freight. All they own goes into a small handbag and once they get here, they're herded ten in a room till the agency-runners call for them. Around Houston Street you can see streets full of those nifty little agencies: they ship the girls all over the States."

"I never thought such things could happen."

"Of course you didn't. Nobody does, my dear —and that's one reason they do happen. Not that the immigrants are unduly favored. All over the East Side you can see families of the Chosen People going into real mourning for cadet-caught girlies, just as if the poor things were really dead. The

other races suffer quite as much, too, though the Yankees are less likely to get into the cheaper joints."

"That's where they give them the brass checks?" asked Violet.

"Yes. The man buys the checks downstairs, on a commutation schedule, just the w'y we used to buy our drink checks in a beer garden. The girls never see real money—except when they make a touch, and then it's not any use—because they cash in their checks to the madam, and she counts them against what her young l'idies owe her. Even at that"—Evelyn nearly sat upright in her animation—"even at that, they do s'y the men try to jew you down as badly as they do here. I've always noticed that the honestest man that ever lived will try to cheat a girl. But you'll learn it all in time, girlie. I'm only sorry that you'll never see the better plices."

Violet missed the innuendo, but she asked:

"Then there are better and worse?"

Evelyn laughed.

"Right-oh!" she said. "The horrid truth is, my dear, that we and Rose are hopelessly middle-class. I wish you could see the better, and as for the worse, wait till you live in a plice where there are sliding panels in the wall, and men are robbed every night."

If there had been any sympathy in the Englishwoman's tone, Violet might have appealed to her for whatever of real assistance she could give, but Evelyn's scarcely interrupted monologue soon made it clear that she had no help to offer.

"It's all rotten," she continued,—"all rotten be-

cause it has to be. Do you fancy that, if Rose wasn't sure of us, she wouldn't have her ear at that keyhole now? She can call in Angel half the time, and one cop or another's never far around the corner. Three weeks ago Phil Beekman, one of her best customers, tried to balance a lamp on his nose and broke it, and Riley was there to arrest him for disorderly conduct before the boy could get to his wallet. He had to pay twenty-five dollars—half went to Riley—for that fifteen-dollar lamp that Rose had insured for eighteen. We're all that w'y; we all have to be spies on the rest. I am, you soon will be, and that little Wanda—well, of course, Rose makes too much fuss over her."

"What do you mean?" asked Violet.

But Evelyn only shook her towsled yellow head.

"I mean, my dear," she said, "that there are some things, you know, that even I don't fancy discussing."

"She was an immigrant, wasn't she?"

"Oh, yes," Evelyn acquiesced, with a yawn. Already her restless heart was tiring of the conversation and her insistent thirst was crying for more alcohol. "Wanda came over here to be a housemaid. She landed in Philadelphia and went directly to an employment agency, like a good girlie. They took her money for their commission in getting her a job, and then they sold her right over here to a sailors' joint."

"For housework?"

"Housework? My dear, you overact your part. There's no housework done in those plices; but Wanda's won her w'y up in the world. Here she

is at Rose's, if you please, though by what sort of housework I shan't tell you."

"I wish——"

"Not another word, my dear. Talking is a dry game. After all, drinking is the king of indoor sports. Come on down and rig a bit of fizz."

But Violet did not join in this predatory expedition. She forgot the plight of the new captive whose cries she had heard; she forgot even the details of Evelyn's just-related case; she remembered only so much of the general situation, now made clear to her, as bore upon her own position, and she came at last to a pitch of crafty courage that was far more promising of success than any of the hysterical determinations that she had previously experienced. Open revolt was futile; she would employ methods more circuitous, and would use whatever weapons were at hand.

It was, as Evelyn had said, a house of spies and eavesdroppers, and, at the next opportunity—which occurred that night—Violet sought again her secret place of vantage on the back stairs, and listened again to her jailer in conversation with the Italian. Her time, as it chanced, was brief, but she heard enough to know that Wesley Dyker was the subject of the conference, and that betrayal of some sort was its intent.

"Nothin' much," Rose was saying, in apparent answer to some question asked before the spy had taken up her breathless post in the darkened stairway. "I'll get more out of him later on."

"Yas," replied Angel, "but how mooch?"

"He said he thought he'd pull it off, all right,

but wasn't sure of O'Malley. Said he'd got a bunch of kind words from up top, but was scared for fear O'Malley would knife him. He's a pretty wise guy for all he's a swell, and he's lookin' out for the double-cross from your crowd."

"He ast you to helpa keepa lookout?"

"Sure he did. Said if O'Malley's man put up a bluff at runnin' independent, I was to tip him off when O'Malley began registering votes here."

"That isa good. More?"

"Some. Said he wanted me to keep my ears wide for any news. Wanted me to pump you."

"He deed?" The voice grew threatening. "Say, now, you tella me why he knaw you knawa me?"

"I guess he has as good ears as most people."

"But how he knawa me an' you——"

"He don't know that, Angel. Keep your hair on. He don't know nothin' about it. If he did, do you think he'd stand for it, an' cough up all these here straight tips to me?"

"Na-aw," the Italian drawlingly admitted, in slow mollification. "Naw, maybe he woulda not."

"He certainly wouldn't. He don't know nothin' about it. What he's afraid of is that somebody might think *he* stood in too good here."

"He say that?"

"Yep."

"Alla right. Now, you tella him when he comes again, O'Malley means——"

The voice dropped to so low a whisper that Violet could hear no more, and, before it was raised, the doorbell had sounded and she had heard Celeste,

upstairs, calling her. She tiptoed back to the upper hallway.

"Cassie say you' New York Central frien' ees askin' for you," volunteered the French girl as they met.

"All right," answered Violet. "I'll be right down. I was trying to swipe a bottle. And say, Celeste, how does that Wesley Dyker come to have such a pull with Miss Rose?"

"Oh-h! You don' know? That Wes' Dyk' 'e mabby be a magistrate nex' 'lection. 'E's one gran' man now for bail an' lawyer when trouble come.—'Es's frien's with so many politicians, too. But Meess Rose, she know 'e will be some more eef 'e be 'lected magistrate."

"Oh, I see. But doesn't she keep standing in, on the quiet, with the other people who want the place, too?"

Celeste nodded a cheerful agreement.

"But of a certainty," she said. "Meess Rose, she know 'er beezness. Whoever get that 'lection, Meess Rose, she will 'ave been 'ees frien'."

Violet asked no more. She had learned enough to put into her hands the best weapon just then available.

XII

ON STRIKE

KATIE FLANAGAN arrived at the Lennox department-store every morning at a quarter to eight o'clock. She passed through the employés' dark entrance, a unit in a horde of other workers, and registered the instant of her arrival on a time-machine that could in no wise be suborned to perjury. She hung up her wraps in a subterranean cloak-room, and, hurrying to the counter to which she was assigned, first helped in "laying out the stock," and then stood behind her wares, exhibiting, cajoling, selling, until an hour before noon. At that time she was permitted to run away for exactly forty-five minutes for the glass of milk and two pieces of bread and jam that composed her luncheon. This repast disposed of, she returned to the counter and remained behind it, standing like a war-worn watcher on the ramparts of a beleaguered city, till the store closed at six, when there remained to her at least fifteen minutes more of work before her sales-book was balanced and the wares covered up for the night. There were times indeed when she did not leave the store until seven o'clock, but those times were caused rather by customers than by the management of the store, which could prevent new shoppers from entering the doors after six, but could hardly turn out those already inside.

The automatic time-machine and a score of more annoying, and equally automatic, human beings, kept watch upon all that she did. The former, in addition to the floor-walker in her section of the store, recorded her every going and coming, the latter reported every movement not prescribed by the regulations of the establishment; and the result upon Katie and her fellow-workers was much the result observable upon condemned assassins under the unwinking surveillance of the Death Watch.

If Katie was late, she was fined ten cents for each offense. She was reprimanded if her portion of the counter was disordered after a mauling by careless customers. She was fined for all mistakes she made in the matter of prices and the additions on her sales-book; and she was fined if, having asked the floor-walker for three or five minutes to leave the floor in order to tidy her hair and hands, in constant need of attention through the rapidity of her work and the handling of her dyed wares, she exceeded her time limit by so much as a few seconds.

There were no seats behind the counters, and Katie, whatever her physical condition, remained on her feet all day long unless she could arrange for relief by a fellow-worker during that worker's luncheon time. There was no place for rest save a damp, ill-lighted "Recreation Room" in the basement, furnished with a piano that nobody had time to play, magazines that nobody had time to read, and wicker chairs in which nobody had time to sit. All that one might do was to serve the whims and accept the scoldings of women customers who knew too ill, or too well, what they wanted to buy; keep a tight rein

upon one's indignation at strolling men who did not intend to buy anything that the shop advertised; be servilely smiling under the innuendoes of the high-collared floor-walkers, in order to escape their wrath; maintain a sharp outlook for the " spotters," or paid spies of the establishment; thwart, if possible, those pretending purchasers who were scouts sent from other stores, and watch for shop-lifters on the one hand and the firm's detectives on the other.

" It ain't a cinch, by no means "—thus ran the departing Cora Costigan's advice to her successor—" but it ain't nothin' now to what it will be in the holidays. I'd rather be dead than work in the toy-department in December—I wonder if the kids guess how we that sells 'em hates the sight of their play-things—and I'd rather be dead *an'* damned than work in the accounting-department. A girl friend of mine worked there last year,—only it was over to Malcare's store—an' didn't get through her Christmas Eve work till two on Christmas morning, an' she lived over on Staten Island. She overslept on the twenty-sixth, an' they docked her a half-week's pay.

" An' don't never," concluded Cora, " don't never let 'em transfer you to the exchange department. The people that exchange things all belong in the psychopathic ward at Bellevue—them that don't belong in Sing Sing. Half the goods they bring back have been used for days, an' when the store ties a tag on a sent-on-approval opera cloak, the women wriggle the tag inside, an' wear it to the theater with a scarf draped over the string. Thank God, I'm goin' to be married! "

In these conditions Katie found many imperative

duties, but none quite so immediately imperative as the repression of Mr. Porter. She had not made her first sale at the main women's hosiery counter on the first floor, to which she had been assigned on her arrival—pretty girls always being favored with first-floor positions—when that tall, gray-whiskered gentleman, his duties in his underground office not at this hour holding him, majestically approached her.

"Good-morning, Miss Flanagan," he said, with a beneficent smile, as he placed his white hand upon her quailing shoulder.

Katie became very busy with the stock that was new to her.

"Good-morning, Mr. Porter," she answered. —"Say, Miss Isaacs, how much do these lisle ones sell at?"

"I thought," said Mr. Porter, fixing her with his apparently emotionless gaze, "that I would just come over and see if you were well taken care of."

"None better, Mr. Porter." Katie smiled sweetly as she said it, and still more sweetly as she significantly added: "Them's always taken good care of as are used to takin' good care of themselves."

Mr. Porter blinked, but his expression, or lack of expression, did not alter.

"No doubt," he responded, as he reluctantly made ready to go away; "but I shall be glad to be of help at any time I can."

"Thank you, Mr. Porter."

"And I shall drop around now and then to see that all goes well."

"Thank you, Mr. Porter."

"Because I was always interested in Miss Costigan—very much interested, and she was very pleasant to me—and I am naturally very much interested in her successor, too."

"Thank you, Mr. Porter."

"And, by the way, Miss Flanagan," he added as his Parthian shaft, "I trust you won't worry over that little loan, you know; there's no hurry in the world about repayment."

Katie met his vacant glance with the innocent eyes of a grateful child.

"That's kind you are, Mr. Porter," she answered, "and since you say it, I shan't worry, sir."

But for all that, she did not by any means dismiss the man from her thoughts. Her true schooling had been received from the textbook of life, and she had readily observed in Porter's demeanor the tokens that announced the beginning of a chase. To one class of hunters there is no closed season, and Katie knew that this class considered her and her kind fair game.

There had been occasions when she had debated seriously, sometimes with herself and sometimes with a companion, whether it was worth while to continue the flight, whether from three to six years of captivity, of toil that must end in death, but that was at least assured of food, were not to be preferred to the continuance of a precarious dodging through the industrial forest with the possibility of starvation lurking behind every bush. But this question she had always, thus far, answered in the negative, at first because of her inherent disinclination to con-

fess defeat in any struggle that engaged her, and at last because of Hermann Hoffmann.

To Katie's cheerful cynicism that blind optimist was an object of unfailing tenderness. She knew how he had been left, when his father's heart was broken after a long battle against an oppressive landlord system, with a gentle mother whom he worshiped and who thus became entirely dependent upon him; how he had sold the few remaining family belongings, escaped the threat of a compulsory military service that would have left Frau Hoffmann in destitution, and come, lured by the glittering promises of one of the immigration agents of a steamship company, to the land where he had been told there existed equality of opportunity for all men. And he had told Katie, in his convincingly simple English, how, a shred at a time, the fabric of his ideal had been torn away; how bitterly he had toiled only to keep his foothold; how the little mother had fallen beneath the stress, and yet how, to the last, he still retained his high hope, and still dreamed of a genuine democracy in a country where the men that worked would eventually become the owners of the wealth that their hands created.

She was thinking of this when, that night, she returned to her tenement and found waiting at her door her neighbor Carrie Berkowicz, the shirt-waist worker, who had told her of the chance of a position at the Lennox shop.

"Hello," said Katie. "Lookin' for me?"

"Yes."

"Come on in."

"Katie led the way and lit the lamp, which threw

a kindly light over the neat, bare room, with its stiff wooden chairs, its oilcloth-covered table, and the lithograph of Our Lady of the Rosary tacked against the room door. A gas-stove, a cot, a bureau, and a screened-off sink completed the furnishings.

"I'm just gettin' a bite of supper," she said, before she asked the cause of Carrie's visit. "You'd better have some."

"No, thank you," replied the caller, with her careful night-school inflection. "I had mine early."

Katie looked at the speaker, whose round cheeks seemed drawn in a new determination, and whose jaw was swollen as if from a blow.

"How did you get through so early, Carrie?" she inquired.

The little Lithuanian's eyes sparkled.

"We've done it," she said.

"Done what?"

"Gone out."

"Struck?"

Carrie nodded.

"You know how it was," she explained; "all the girls around here do. We've had to work all day long from early morning till late night, Sundays too, and five dollars for the seven days is counted pretty good wages."

"But somebody said the firms' books showed your pay was higher."

"Oh, the books did show it. You see, they carry only a few of us on their salary list, and then each of the foremen hires helpers paid out of one girl's wages. You know as well as I do that most of us

live on oatmeal and crackers, and rent one bed in somebody else's tenement."

Katie was acquainted with enough of the shirt-waist makers to be aware that this was true.

"That's so," she granted; "only I thought them things were all ended after the last row."

"Well, they weren't ended; they were only helped for a few months, and now it's summer and most of us would have been laid off. It's the worst time to strike—we know that—but things came to a point where we had to make a fight, or there wouldn't have been any of us left to fight when a better time did come."

"You're talkin' about the union?"

"Yes, that's the real point. The bosses started a union of their own."

"Among themselves?"

"No—they've always had that. I mean they got the new girls into what they called a beneficial association, with the bosses for officers. If you join that, you get all sorts of favors, but you can't join unless you leave the old union."

"Well?"

"Well, then, as soon as they get the beneficial association full enough, they discharge the union girls and, little by little, withdraw the privileges from the Association members, so that things go back to where they were before."

The girl spoke quietly, but Katie remembered many of the evils that Carrie had not mentioned. She recalled how each moment's pause in work meant a deduction from the worker's pay; how the elaborate system of fines taxed the girl whose fingers

left her task to rearrange a straying lock of hair, and how the tears forced by overstrained nerves or over-exerted muscles cost the offender almost a fixed price apiece; how the girls that did piecework received no money unless they brought the little check for every article made, the firm thereby saving, through the inevitable loss of some of these checks, a proportion of payment as well known to them and as certain as the mortality rates of life insurance.

"An' so you went out, Carrie?" she said.

"Yes; they turned down our committee at three o'clock this afternoon, and at three-fifteen we had all left the shops. Oh, it was great! But they've got a lot of hands left, and they'll have some of their orders filled in Newark. I don't know how it will end."

"The bosses wouldn't budge?"

"Not an inch. The most they did was to get some of us aside, each away from the rest, and offer us seven dollars a week apiece if we'd fix things up so that our friends would go back to work without any more trouble."

Katie, who well knew what seven dollars a week must mean to this calm, hardworking Lithuanian girl, who had come to America alone and was saving to send her parents money enough to follow, shot a sidelong glance at the speaker; but Carrie's tone had not changed; she seemed unaware that she was narrating anything unusual.

"An' you turned down the offer?" asked Katie.

"Last strike," said Carrie, "one of those union girls was sent out to sell copies of a special edition of *The Call* for the benefit of the strikers. She

hadn't had anything to eat for three days. One man gave her a five-dollar bill for a single paper. Nobody saw him give it; she didn't have to account for it; and she was nearly starved; but she came back and turned in that whole five dollars to the fund. That was one of the girls I was representing this afternoon. Do you suppose I could go back on such girls? Do you suppose I could help myself when I knew it was hurting the others?"

Katie did not immediately reply, but her blue eyes shone. Presently she asked:

"Picket-duty, now, for yours?"

"I began it right away. I spoke to one scab as she came out—just asked her wouldn't she join the union for her own good and ours—just laid my hand on her wrist—but they had the cops ready and their own strong-arm men, and had three of them beating me for my pains."

"Pinched?"

"Of course. The magistrate let me off with a lecture on the rights of every girl to work for starvation-wages if she felt like doing it and like making others starve.—But next time it will be a fine or the workhouse."

Katie had begun to busy herself with the preparations for her meal. She had warmed some coffee on the gas-stove and taken from the cupboard a roll and a few slices of dried beef.

"Look here," she said, stopping in the midst of this task; "how much money have you got?"

"Oh, I'm all right, thanks."

"Maybe you are, but you might as well be better. Now, the while the strike lasts, just you give up

that room acrost the hall an' come over here with me."

Carrie's brown locks shook in doubtful refusal.

"You're the real goods," she said; "but I don't have to do that."

"Of course you don't have to, but I'd take it a real kindness. What's the use o' keepin' a whole room to yourself when you'll be spendin' parts of the time in jail?"

Carrie laughed.

"Will you let me pay half?" she asked.

"Sure I will."

"Then perhaps——"

"That's settled," ended Katie, and it was arranged that Carrie's few sticks of furniture should be moved into the Irish girl's quarters the next morning.

The details had just been settled when Hermann entered, his cheerful lips concluding the last bar of "Die Wacht Am Rhein."

"Hello!" said Katie, smiling. "Are you out of a job, too? Or are you just goin' to be late the night?"

Hermann pulled his cap from his blonde curls and, with blushing cheeks, grinned broadly.

"Needer," he answered. "I'm chust on my vay to de saloon." He twisted his cap between his awkward fingers. "I vanted only to ask you somesing, Katie."

"All right. Sit down an' ask it. You know Carrie. Don't mind her."

"Sure I know her, only——"

Carrie rose. She was aware of the pair's relations,

and too firmly bound by East Side etiquette to think it well to make of herself that third person who constitutes a crowd.

"I've got to be going," she said.

"Don't you pay no attention to him," Katie objected. "Sit still. Have some coffee, Hermann-boy?"

But Hermann shook his head.

"No, thank you," he said. "I've got chust a minute."

"Then what was it you were wishin' to say?"

"Aboud dot girl I dalked to you aboud on our vay to Coney. You see now you have a tshob, it seemed like ve might do somesing for her."

Katie dropped all trace of banter.

"I'll tell you how it is, Hermann," she said, and she did tell him.

As soon as she had secured her place, she had determined to help. At present much financial assistance was impossible, and employment there was none. It would be dangerous, moreover, to all concerned—not least of all to Violet—for the girl to make a dash for liberty in any manner that would give to Rose a chance to secure vengeance through her friends the police. But Katie was decided, and Carrie at once agreed, that, could the escape be arranged, Violet might at least be sheltered in Katie's room until some work should be found for her.

"All I want to know, Hermann-boy," concluded Katie, "is however in the world we're goin' to get word to her."

"Dot's chust vat I vanted fer to tell you aboud," said Hermann. "You know Conrad Schultz. He's

now got my route vith de brewery-vagon. De stable's chust two doors round de corner. I've explained to him, und he'll slip a note to Miss Violet the first dime he sees her."

"We'll write to-night," said Carrie.

"An' I'll hand it to him on my way to work in th' mornin'," added Katie. "Now you run along or you'll be docked."

Hermann assented, smiling. He turned to the door, fumbled with the knob, and dropped his cap. Katie, a steaming cup of coffee in one hand, stooped to recover it just as Hermann himself bent forward. In the presence of a third person, the German felt a sudden thrill of courage.

"Ach, but you're a goot girl, Katie!" he cried. "Und here's a liddle revard fer it!"

He seized his cap, jerked her black head toward him, and imprinted a resounding kiss on her pink cheek.

Katie laughed and broke free. She spilled some of the coffee, but she administered a smart blow with her open palm on the offending mouth.

"You'd never dared to do it if you hadn't thought I had me hands full!" she called after her lover as he clattered heavily and happily down the stairs. "An' just in revenge for that," she added, still blushing, to Carrie, as she closed the door, "me an' you'll go out for a little spree of our own to-night."

"Where to?" asked the factory-girl.

"To a dance," answered Katie. "Me feet have got that lazy walkin' after a job that I'm afraid they'll forget all the dancin'-steps they ever knew, unless I hurry an' get some practicin' again."

"I don't know," said Carrie, doubtfully, "I've got to get up early in the morning."

"An' what about me? Besides, haven't I got me friend, the alarm-clock?"

"But my jaw's smashed from that fight."

"Who'll see it?"

"Let's make it a moving-picture show."

"An' pay the same for half an hour's headache that we could get a whole night's dancin' for?"

"I've got to be walking the picket-line all day to-morrow."

"Yes, an' I have to be standin' behind a counter. You haven't got nothin' on me there. Get your wraps together now an' come ahead, Carrie. I hear there's a new place opened on Grand Street."

Carrie knew how to dance—the poorest girl on the East Side knows that, because not to dance is to miss the one amusement obtainable by the very poor—and, like Katie, she was of that relatively small army that can frequent the dance-halls for perhaps as much as a year without contamination. Before she had taken her course at the night-school, she had even danced in the rooms that the Hebrew politicians provide behind their saloons near Houston Street, where she had seen cadets successfully ply their trade among bland-faced immigrant girls whose very language was unknown to them; and she was therefore wholly prepared for the picture that she confronted when, Katie having paid her ten cents for the two admissions, they entered the low-ceilinged basement of a saloon and tenement-house, and came upon the meeting-place of the Danny Delancy Social *Club.*

Through a veil of dust raised by stamping feet and swirling skirts, through a cloud of heat from a room with every window closed, through a blast of odors compounded of the fumes of alcohol, the scent of tobacco, and the miasma of sweating men and women, there rose, from somewhere, the cries of a beaten piano, struck and thumped into a shrieking likeness to the "Chocolate Soldier" waltz, which only now and then was made at all audible above the rhythmic hubbub. Although the evenings of Saturdays and Sundays were the most popular for dancing, the floor was so crowded that only the expertness of these trained dancers prevented collision and panic. The steam from the bodies of the performers joined with the dry dust in half obscuring the blue-burning gas. The strident laughter of the patrons helped the scraping of their feet in subduing the sounds of the piano. The men gyrated grimly in wet shirt-sleeves, and the women, affecting the most somber shades chosen for the longest wear, spun in their partners' arms with stolid, gum-grinding jaws and lips that were mirthless. Except for the youthful "spielers" admitted without charge, or even hired, to dance with the awkward or make wall-flowers sufficiently happy to insure their return, there were but two types of men among the patrons. There was the native of the quarter, heavy-faced, large-muscled, quick to anger and ready with the fists, a hard-drinking, hard-living sort, no more careful of his neighbor's morals than of his own, yet good-natured, easy-going, pliable. And winding in and out among these, slow and suave, like some sleek species of vulture, were the young men that came

there not for pleasure, but for profit, always-smiling young men with manners offensively elaborate, whose shining black hair smelled of oil, whose skin was like decaying dough, and whose entire time was spent in making the acquaintance of new girls, giving dancing-lessons to new girls in crowded corners, and taking new girls into the adjoining back-bar for a drink.

To these types the attending women more or less corresponded. Most of them came alone, or in groups of two or three—a plain girl always befriended by one of more charm—because etiquette demanded that, if a man brought a companion, his companion must give him what dances he wanted, and so she would have few offers from his fellows, who observed a rigid code that forbade poaching upon a friend's preserve. There were some that could afford to wear gay dresses because they were frankly in a business that, of however brief duration, made gay dresses possible as a luxury and necessary as an advertisement, and this appearance of wealth was never absent from the hungry eyes of the young women about them. There were others, also few, who were plainly new either to the country or to this particular form of amusement. But the majority came from the factories and shops, lured by nothing worse than youth's natural craving for its right to pleasure, seeking to forget the exertions of the day in these new exertions of the night, drifting whither they neither knew nor greatly cared, the necessary factors of an industrial system too fatuous to conserve their efficiency.

On every chair along the reeking walls, now trod-

den underfoot on the floor, and now picked up like dry leaves and twirled about in the little eddies of warm air created by the romping dancers, were cards and handbills—"throwaways" the patrons called them—which, often in curious English, announced special balls and "grand receptions" shortly to be given in this or some similar club. Here one was "cordially invited" to the "third annual dance given by the two well-known friends, Greaser Einstein and Kid Boslair, at New Starlight Hall, Gents Twenty-five and Ladies Fifteen"; there one was cautioned not to miss the "Devil Dance" that would form a part of the forthcoming "reception of the Harry Cronin Association, Young Theo, floor-manager"; and again, one was told that the "Special Extra Event of the Season" would be the ball of the "Ryan McCall Social, Incorporated, Tammany Hall, ticket admit gent including wardrobe, Thirty-five cents; ladies free."

Katie and the shirtwaist-maker got seats near the door, waved and called to half a dozen acquaintances and strained their eyes to see through the swirling mist.

"It looks like old times," said Carrie.

"Smells like 'em," Katie amended; "only I've been away from these places for awhile an' I notice that, new place or old, the faces change pretty quick. Who's the woman in red, with the yellow hair, Carrie?"

She pointed to a figure spinning about the center of the room, her crimson skirt flying far behind her like the trail of a comet.

"I know her," said Carrie. "A year ago she

came to New York from the country to find work. When she was about starved, she rang a bell under the sign 'Helping Hand Home'—she didn't know what that meant except that it meant charity. The superintendent told her his place couldn't do anything for her; she might be spoiled by associating with the people he helped; his mission was for bad women that were sorry; not for good women that hadn't anything to be sorry about. 'But I'm hungry,' she told him. 'Can't help it,' he said; 'you're not qualified.' This girl went away, and came back a month later. 'I don't want to come in just yet,' she said; 'but I do want to tell you that I'm qualified now'—and she was."

Katie took the facts for what, amid surroundings where such facts are plentiful, they seemed worth.

"Hard luck," she said, though not without meaning.

"Yes, and look at her clothes."

"That's the trouble," said Katie; "we can't help lookin' at them—the likes of us—any more than she can help wearin' them. It's that or a tenement with two dark rooms an' the rent raised every year."

They danced, for among the soberer men there were many that knew them, and neither girl remembered the weariness of her work in the exhaustion of her dancing. Between dances, in the dressing-room, they talked with their acquaintances among the girls, gossiping of the men and the other women, and now and then, their throats dry and their faces streaming, they were taken into the dingy side-bar and were *bought* a glass of beer.

As midnight drew closer the dance became more stormy. Many of the working-girls went home, and their places were filled by women of the brighter dressed class. There were some that were plainly drunk, and these clumsily imitated the suggestive contortions of the salaried dancers now sent upon the floor to stimulate the amateurs. One girl, in a cleared space surrounded by laughing men and envious, though apparently scornful, women, performed a dance popularly supposed to be forbidden by the police. There were several fights, and in one especially nasty scuffle a lad was badly cut by the knife of a jealous partner.

"I guess that's about plenty for us," observed Katie, as she and Carrie shouldered their way from the crowd surrounding the wounded boy and his shrieking assailant.

Both girls were sufficiently familiar with such episodes to accept them with calm, but both were at last tired out.

"I suppose you're right," Carrie assented, "though I did have a good time."

"An' it was you didn't want to come!" grinned Katie as they went out upon the cool street.

"I know." Carrie's round face grew hard and puzzled. "I know," she admitted, "only sometimes——"

"Och, come on, an' cheer up! We must write our letter for the brewery-man before we get to bed, Carrie-girl."

They did write it, but Carrie, when she had gone into her own room for the last night she was to spend



there, sat for some time motionless upon the edge of the cot.

"I know," she repeated as if to some invisible confessor; "I know both sides of it, and, honestly, I don't know which is worse. I know all that can be said, only—sometimes—I wonder——"

XIII

JAIL-DELIVERY

ROSE was ill—she had been drinking too much for the past week—and Violet, in her no longer fresh red kimona, was in the kitchen talking to Cassie when, one morning, the new driver of the brewery-wagon stopped at the door.

"Morning," he said with what at once struck Violet, who was now constantly on the watch, as a visible effort at nonchalance.

Conrad Schultz was a tall, raw-boned German-American, with a long nose and pale, sorrowful mustache, but with an eye in the cerulean depths of which there lurked the cold fire of reliable strategy.

"Come in," said Violet, "an' have a drop of something."

"Thanks."

He came in cumbersomely, and took an uneasy seat.

"Some chilly for this season," he remarked, with a cool glance in the direction of the ebony Cassie, hovering glumly in the background.

Violet thought she caught the meaning of the man, whom she knew was Hermann Hoffmann's successor.

"It is chilly for this time of year," she said. "What will you have? It better be something warming. There's whiskey here, or, if you don't mind

waiting till Cassie goes for it, there's some good brandy in the cellar."

Schultz appeared to hesitate, and Violet, watching him, could not, for a moment, decide whether there was, after all, any foundation for the hope that his appearance had wakened.

"Well, if it ain't no trouble," he at last blurted, "I *would* like a taste of real brandy."

"Cassie," said Violet, "bring up a fresh bottle of brandy for Mr.—Mr.——"

"Schultz," prompted that individual.

"For Mr. Schultz, Cassie."

Cassie, however, seemed to have scented surrounding mystery.

"Ah reckon there's a bottle som'ares about yhere, Miss Vi'let," she demurred.

"No, there isn't."

"But, Miss Vi'let, there was one jes' half empty las' night."

"Miss Rose took that to bed with her. Don't talk so much. Go down an' get a fresh bottle for Mr. Schultz."

The girl left the room slowly and sullenly.

Schultz sat silent and motionless until a moment had followed the closing of the door. Then the cold flame was relighted in his eye.

"She called you Miss Violet?" he asked, though still in the most commonplace of tones.

"That's my name."

"Did you ever talk to the man that had my job before I had it?"

Violet, with the catlike quiet and ease that always *characterized* her movements, stepped to the door

through which Cassie had just passed. She flung it quickly open. The black girl nearly fell headlong into the room.

Without an instant's hesitation, Violet did the one effective thing. She smacked the negress smartly across the face.

"I heard you!" she said, in tones that were all the more awe-inspiring because they were low. "What do you mean by spying on me, you black devil? Think I want to cheat the house? I'd not be so clumsy about it, if I did! Think I'm trying to skidoo? I'd walk out if I felt like it! I'll go right to Miss Rose about this, an' have you fired so quick you won't have time to pack your duds!"

The servant remained as she had sprawled.

"Oh, please don', miss!" she wailed. "Please don' tell Miss Rose! Ah wasn't tryin' to spy on youse. Ah jes' drapped somethin' yhere, an' ah was jes' tryin' to fin'——"

"Don't you lie to me," said Violet, her cheeks, now always so wan in the morning light, flushing to something like their former color. "Get up off your knees."

"Miss Vi'let, please don' tell on me."

The black girl's voice threatened to rise to a dangerous wail.

"All right," said Violet, quickly. "I'll let it go this time; but you hurry up and get that brandy, or I might change my mind. Pull the cork while you're at it, and fetch a decent glass from the dining-room."

Cassie, murmuring thanks with her thick lips, and wiping her eyes with the big knuckles of her right

fist, scrambled to her feet, and started again upon her errand.

This time Violet left the door open. She waited till the servant was out of earshot. Then she opened the door to the back stairway, which she herself had twice used to excellent purpose, and, finding nobody there, returned to Schultz.

"Got something for me?" she whispered.

But no haste upon her part would speed his Teutonic caution.

"I asked you," he said, as if he had not observed the little encounter through which he had sat serene and unconcerned, "whether you knew the man who had my job before what I had it."

"Yes—yes, I knew him. Quick!"

"And your name is Miss Violet?"

"You heard the girl call me that. Can't you hustle?"

"I don't want to hustle. If you're the girl I want, you've kept me waitin' here three mornings already."

"Well, I'm the person all right. You know that now. Oh, won't you please hurry? Don't you see how things are here?"

"I seen enough to make me want to go slow."

"You're going slow all right. What more do you want to know? I talked to the man you're telling me about and he said he'd see what he could do."

Her replies came with the rapidity of musketry, but Schultz spoke with stubborn deliberation.

"Was that all he told you?"

"Sure it was."

"Nothin' more?"

"No.—Can't you hurry? Can't you believe me? —He didn't say no more.—Quick!—Oh, yes, he said he'd talk to his girl Katie about me.—Quick!—Hush-t! Here she comes!"

Cassie's step sounded only a few yards away, but Schultz, now apparently satisfied of Violet's identity, displayed an unlooked for speed. The heavy hand that had been clumsily reposing in the bulging side-pocket of his coat shot free. Violet seized a fist that opened and withdrew as her own fingers closed on a bit of paper.

Cassie entered to find them the width of the kitchen apart. Violet was pouring herself a drink of whiskey into a soiled glass, and, if her hand trembled, the silk swathed back that was presented to the servant hid all tokens of nervousness.

She waited until Schultz had slowly drunk his brandy. She waited to exchange a few more words and to see him go. She even waited a little longer in order not to make her retreat too patently hurried and in order to subdue by threats and cajolery whatever suspicions might still be lingering in the black breast of the apparently penitent Cassie. But at last she made her way to her own room and unrolled the bit of paper.

It was a letter dated from Katie's address four days previous to the day of its receipt, and it was couched in stiff and formal phraseology. She read:

"MISS VIOLET,

"*Dear Miss Violet*—

"This is to inform you that I am Miss Katie Flanagan, particular friend of Mr. Hermann Hoffmann, who used to drive the brewery-wagon that left beer at your house. He told me

about you and what you want, and I told a lady friend, Miss Carrie Berkowicz, who is coming to live with me. I have just got into a small job and Carrie has just got out of one, and we don't know of none yet for you, but we'll keep looking and sure will find one, and meantime we want you to come here and stop with us just as soon as you can beat it from that place where you are. Don't you lose your nerve, and don't bother to talk about things when you get here, because we know how it is. You needn't worry about how we feel, we have too many friends who had the same bad luck as you, and least said soonest mended, we think. So come right here first chance you get and stay as long as you like, and if we're not home when you get here sit on the step till we do get home, and if anybody asks any questions just say you're a friend of ours, because you are, and that's none of their business anyhow, and nobody won't bother you any more.

"Now keep your head cool and God bless you with best wishes!

"From your friend

"Miss Katie Flanagan."

Without daring to lessen her courage by giving way to the feelings that this letter stirred, Violet read it twice, tore off the address, concealed it in one of the "rats" on which the structure of her russet hair was founded, and then tore the rest of the epistle into small bits, which she flung out of the narrow space between the riveted shutters of her room. She was now almost ready to strike. In her captivity, she had, after the first shock, made it her business to learn what she could of those about her. She knew that Wesley Dyker had once been what was called a straw-bail man, an agent who, for a high consideration, provided bogus bail for such women as the police, to keep up appearances, were forced from time to time to arrest. She had been told that he was wont, for a still higher consideration, to appear at court for these clients, in the rôle *of a defender* of the wronged poor, and in a very

different rôle in their behalf with the dispensers of justice to the underworld. She had gathered that his friendship with one political faction aided in securing Rose the chance to purchase that expensive police-protection toward which Angel, unknown to Dyker, assisted Rose through an opposing faction. And she believed that his ambition was now to gain a magistracy from which he could grant bail on bonds signed by his own servants, secure for prisoners the legal service of men that would return him a commission, and pronounce judgment or dispense mercy for the furtherance of his own fortune and the strengthening of his own power. Out of these threads of knowledge Violet resolved to weave the net in which to catch freedom.

That afternoon Evelyn informed her that Rose was still abed and had sent for her favorite, Wanda, to console her. This meant that she would not descend to the ground floor or be visible to any visitors before the next evening, and that the Englishwoman, promoted to temporary command, would have to pass the night in that reception of callers which necessitated the appearance of drinking much and the fact of drinking almost nothing.

"She does that every time she goes on a bust, my dear," complained Evelyn. "Of course she jolly well knows that she can trust me and that I have some manners too, but I wish she would remember that I also have a thirst and can't do without my drop of real liquor."

Violet's nerves tingled. With her best effort to bury all signs of her mounting hope, she ventured:

"I wish I could help you."

"You, my dear?" Evelyn's eyebrows raised and her contralto voice followed them. "Catch the madam letting anyone but me take charge! You know you're none of you allowed down in the front hall unless you're sent for. Things are ticklish enough, thank you, with that new girl upstairs."

It was almost the first mention that had been made to Violet of the latest captive since the recent day of Evelyn's exposition of the entire traffic. Violet had not dared to ask any more questions than those that she deemed necessary for the perfection of her own plans, and she dared ask none now.

"I do hate the job," Evelyn was continuing, "even if it does mean a few bits extra. Rose says that fellow Dyker is due to-night. She's not fit to see him above all men, and he's the one I most particularly hate to meet, because he was a friend of my friend the doctor and used to call with him now and again at my flat. I always fancy he's making comparisons under those narsty low lids of his."

Violet, in sudden reaction, felt choking with despair.

"I could see him," she said.

But Evelyn's honors sat heavily upon their possessor.

"You're not a trusty yet, my dear, by any manner of means," she responded. "No, no; you will go to your own room after dinner and stay there till you are wanted."

She tilted her sharp chin and strolled kitchenward for a drink; but, though she left behind her a Violet discouraged, it was not a Violet beaten.

In fact, the girl made her own opportunity. No-

ticing that evening that Evelyn took up a dignified position in the parlor and had Cassie conduct all the guests thither, Violet quickly disposed of the first person that claimed her attention, and, having made her best toilet—having restored her cheeks to a resemblance of their pristine glow, coiffed her russet hair, and donned her best of linen—she descended quietly to the first landing on the stairway, there to take up her watch. Before she was again in demand, she saw the servant admit Wesley Dyker. She ran quickly downward and, just as Cassie stepped forward to precede him, brushed by him in the rosy twilight of the hall.

"Ask to see me," she whispered. "Ask to see Violet. Don't let on I told you. I've heard something you want to know about O'Malley."

Before the man's shadowy figure could come to pause, she had passed him and caught up to Cassie.

"Where have you been?" she asked. "I've been calling for you for five minutes. I need some more water in my room."

She turned and reascended the stairs, but her door had not long been closed before the servant was knocking upon the panel.

"Here's you' water, Miss Vi'let," said Cassie. "An' Miste' Dyker wants fer to see you daown in de back parlor."

Violet took the useless pitcher, made sure that the remnant of Katie's note was secure in its hiding-place, and hurried, with Cassie following, to the garish room in which Dyker was awaiting her.

He was seated on the lazy, pillowed sofa on which Violet had fallen asleep so soon after her arrival in

this house. He was in evening-clothes that served him, on the East Side, much as the advertised portraits of certain patent-medicine makers serve their proprietors, the flaccid whiteness of his face still bearing traces of past beauty, the weakness of his mouth hidden by his crisp, short, brown mustache, and his heavy lids concealing the secret of his steel-gray eyes.

He half rose as she entered, but she motioned him to sit still.

"Hello!" she said, with the easy manner of the house, which always seemed to presuppose a previous acquaintance. "Have you ordered anything? I'm terribly dry."

He took her hand and caught her meaning.

"So am I, Miss Violet," he answered. "Let's have something."

Violet turned to the servant.

"Cassie," she said, "bring up a couple of bottles."

She waited for the door to close, and then sat down beside Dyker.

"Speak low," she cautioned. "That girl will listen if she can. You'll have to pretend to be making love to me."

Dyker regarded her with smiling approval. Her blue eyes shone with excitement and red blood fought through the rouge on cheek and fully ripe mouth.

"What you ask will be both easy and pleasant," he answered.

"No, no; none of that. This is no time for bluffing. Put your arm around my shoulder. That way. Now then, you heard what I told you in the hall?"

Dyker, with his type's disinclination to take seriously anything that any woman has to say upon serious matters, smiled assent.

"You seem to have been doing some listening yourself," he said, as his fingers tightened unnecessarily upon her shoulder.

"Yes, I did, and it's lucky for you I did it. Will you promise not to give me away?"

"Of course I promise."

"Not even to Miss Rose?"

"Not even to Rosie."

"And if I help you, will you do me a favor?"

"To look at you I should say that I'd do you any favor you asked, and do it without expecting anything in return."

His pale lips were curled in a half-scoffing smile, but Violet's next words brushed from his flaccid face all traces of amusement.

"You remember that night you told Miss Rose about what you wanted to get at the next election? You said you were afraid of O'Malley giving you the double cross."

Dyker stiffened.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded.

"Hush! Keep your voice down, or I won't tell you nothing of what I know. Remember you're supposed to be making love to me."

"All right, all right; but I want an answer to my question."

"Well, then, of course, I heard it. I was at the keyhole there—that's why I want you to whisper now.—And I heard more."

"What was that?"



"Wait a minute. You'll do me a favor if I tell you?"

"Anything," he smiled.

"But this is business. If I tell you something that it's worth your while to know, will you promise not to blow on me to Miss Rose?"

"I promise."

"And to do something more that I'll ask you?"

Wesley was now certain that he must not stick at promises.

"Surely."

"Then sit tight. I don't know as much about O'Malley as I pretended out there in the hall, but I do know about Miss Rose. I don't know whether O'Malley is goin' to double-cross you or not, but I do know that Miss Rose has given you the double-cross already."

She had thought that passion played a large part in his relations with her mistress, and she had counted upon awakening his jealousy. What, however, had far exceeded his affection was a poor pride of possession, and when Violet's words, in addition to touching his ambition, struck at that pride, they aroused an anger that was far more dangerous than any sense of love betrayed.

"What's that?" he demanded.

Two red beacons flashed into his pale checks, and his heavy lids, shooting upward for a single instant, disclosed hard, gray eyes gone hot and malevolent.

"Be careful. Speak low, I tell you," she cautioned; "and remember your promise."

"I don't believe——"

"*Here's* Cassie!"

They waited while the black opened the champagne and filled the glasses.

Violet brushed Dyker's hair over his eyes and laughed at the effect. Dyker caught the offending hand and kissed it by way of punishment.

"Cassie," he banteringly asked, "why didn't you ever tell me there was such a nice little girl in this house? I had to get the news from a friend on the outside."

He tossed the now grinning negress a dollar and, as soon as she had left them, dropped the farce as promptly as did Violet.

"I say I can't believe you," he resumed, the two spots of anger still glowering in his cheeks.

Violet knew that her whole hope rested upon her ability to force conviction.

"You've got to believe me," she said. "I'll tell you all that you told Miss Rose till I had to run away, that evening."

She did it, omitting scarcely a particular.

"That's right, ain't it?" she concluded.

"May be. But what does that prove? It only shows that you heard me."

"It shows that I can hear Miss Rose when she talks to somebody else. And I did hear her."

"Whom was she talking to?"

"The man you asked her about. To Rafael Angelelli."

"Well, but I told her to talk to him."

"An' she did it. But the first time I heard her was just before you told her to."

"That same night?"



"He was in the kitchen with her when you came in. Why, he's here all the time! I don't care what she pretends to you, she's stuck on him, an' every girl in the house knows it."

Rapidly, but as fully as she had sketched the dialogue between Rose and Dyker, she now described the first conversation that she had overheard between her mistress and the Italian.

"I'd come down to graft a drink," she said, "an' I heard them from the stairs. That's how, after he'd left, I came to listen to you too."

Dyker had quailed under the revelation, thus made to him, of political danger. He now quivered in anger at the comments upon himself, somewhat colored, that Violet had placed in the mouths of Rose and Angel.

"I'll find out about this!" he said, struggling against the desperate arms flung swiftly around him to keep him on the sofa. "Let me go! By God, I'll have that drunken cat down here and squeeze the truth out of her throat!"

All the caution, all the craft, all that she had counted upon as the real Wesley Dyker seemed to have escaped him. His voice was still low, but in every other respect he was a raging beast.

She fought with him, mentally and physically.

"You can't get anything out of her that way," Violet urged, as the man twisted under her strong hands. "Of course she'll say it's all lies. And you'd only be warning her. You don't want her to know that you know; you want a chance to block her game."

Partly convinced by this argument and partly

subdued by the physical restraint that accompanied it, Dyker ceased his struggles.

"But I want to be sure," he muttered sullenly.

"You can't be sure by goin' to Miss Rose."

"Well, I ought to tell her." The high tide of his anger was slowly subsiding, and the rocky Dyker that she had built on was beginning to show its crest above the still hissing waves. "Look here, Violet," he said, "I'm sorry I behaved like such a fool. I beg your pardon, but you must see that I have got to put this thing up to Rose."

"You forget your promise."

"No, I don't, but I must make sure."

Violet thought rapidly.

"Listen," she said; "I told you I wanted you to do something for me an' you gave your word you'd do it.—Will you?"

"Of course I will, only I'm thinking a little about myself."

"This will help you, too."

"What do you want?"

Violet drew a long breath.

"I want you to go over to the avenue right away," she said, "and buy me a long cloak and a hat and bring them back, and then take me out of here without a word to anybody. You needn't walk more'n three squares with me, an' then I won't bother you no more."

Dyker drew away and whistled softly. His face grew quite composed again. The heavy lids fell over his eyes.

"So that's it, is it?" he asked.

"I want to get away," said Violet.

"And so you've cooked up this little mess of lies to make me the goat, eh?"

Violet felt the sands slipping beneath her feet. She laced her fingers together till the knuckles bruised her flesh.

"Don't do that," she pleaded; "don't take it that way; it's true, what I told you, every word of it. I only want you to keep your promise to me."

She stopped with a sob, and waited.

Wesley reached calmly for a glass of wine, drank it, put down the glass, thrust his hands deep into his trousers' pockets, and, stretching out his long legs, regarded, humming, the toes of his shining pumps.

"I don't believe you," he said at last.

"But, Mr. Dyker——"

"It's too thin."

"Even if it was a lie," Violet despairingly persisted, "you ought to help me. Do you know who I am?"

"That's the point."

"Do you know how I was brought here?"

"I can guess."

"I was tricked. The man said he wanted to marry me. I didn't know. I believed him. An' they beat me an' starved me and did things I couldn't think about an' couldn't help thinkin' about. An' all I want is just for you to do me this one little favor. I won't bother you. I won't blow on you——"

"What's that?"

"Oh, you know I wouldn't blow on you! I couldn't. I want to forget the whole thing. I've

got friends to go to who'll get me work. I only want you to get me out of the door and safe away."

Like most men of his sort Dyker, although ready enough to make a living out of the results of cruelty, hated the sight of cruelty's self. The girl's words touched, though lightly, his selfish heart.

"But I can't afford to help you," he protested. "You see how I'm tied up here. I can't have Rose jump on me now."

"You know she's jumping on you already. You know she's knifing you in the back. The only way you can stop her is by using what I've told you."

"Of course," said Dyker in the tone of a man thinking aloud, "if she really was playing both ends against the middle, I could pull her teeth by going straight to O'Malley and telling him so."

Violet did not wholly understand this, but she agreed immediately.

"Of course you could," she said.

"And I suppose I could have her pinched then, if you'd testify against her. Would you do that? Would you go into court?"

Violet's fingers closed spasmodically.

"Just give me the chanc't," she said fervently.

"And of course there are other girls who've been in the same scrape here?"

"There's a new one upstairs this minute."

"There is? Um. That's good." He rattled the money in his pocket. "Only, look here," he persisted, "if you have been telling the truth, it will probably make me solid with O'Malley, but if you haven't, I'll go clean to smash."

Violet saw the turn of affairs and, with hope's revival, her mind cleared immediately.

"I haven't told you all," she said, "and I guess the rest will make you sure enough."

"There's more then?"

"A lot."

"What is it?"

"Will you help me out of here?"

"If you convince me.—Let's see; the shops around here are still open.—Yes, if you convince me, you'll be out of here in half an hour."

It was her only chance. She did not hesitate. She told him the whole of what she had heard of the later assuring interview between Rose and Angelelli.

This time he listened quietly, his face inscrutable.

"That all?" he asked when she had ended.

"That's all," she said.

"It's the truth?"

"Ain't I sayin' it proof that it's true? How could I make it up? I don't know all that it means."

"You knew enough to pass it on to me."

"Lucky for you I did, too; but I don't know all it means—how could I?—and you do know, an' that ought to be proof enough that it's God's truth, Mr. Dyker."

She stopped. Her case was with the jury.

Dyker rose.

"Cassie!" he called.

Violet leaped to her feet and laid her hands on his arm.

"What are you goin' to do?" she whispered.

He silenced her with a gesture.

"What you want," he said.

Cassie put her black head in at the door.

"Cassie," he continued, flipping the maid another dollar, "I'm a little off my feed. I'm going to the drugstore on the corner and get fixed up."

"Thank you, Miste' Dyker.—Ah kin go fer you, Miste' Dyker," said the negress. "Thank you, sah."

"No, thanks, Cassie, I can go myself; I want the air. But you can do something else for me. You can just not let this girl run away from me. I know she would run if she could, but I like her too well to let her, so if anybody wants her, just you say she's in here and engaged for the evening by me. I'll be back in fifteen minutes."

He left one door as the willingly assenting Cassie closed the other, and Violet flung herself on the sofa and buried her face in the cushions, now fearful that the servant, notwithstanding their precautions, had overheard her, now afraid that Dyker would change his purpose and fail to return, and again dreading that he might betray her to Rose. Since the night she had waited for Max to telephone in the café, since the terrible morning that had followed, it was the longest quarter of an hour that she had known, but it at last dragged its quivering length away. The doorbell rang. Cassie passed through the room to find Violet sitting suddenly upright, and at once returned with Dyker, his summer raincoat tossed across his arm.

As the servant left them, he lifted the coat. Below it, not wrapped in the paper usual to a new purchase, was a dark cloak. He unrolled it, uncov-

ered a beaver hat, and handed them both to the panting Violet.

"Here you are," he said quietly.

She seized them and began to put them on.

"No," he cautioned, "on second thought, I guess I'd better carry them. The parlor door's open, and Evelyn and Fritzie are in there with a couple of men. I'll go ahead and open the vestibule door and the front door. Then you come by as if you were going upstairs."

"Evelyn'll come out to see if I have any money."

"She'll never learn that, though here, by the way, is a ten-dollar bill that will come in handy.—The doors will be open and I'll be on the pavement. Keep only a yard behind me. Riley's at the other end of his beat, and I have a cab at the curb. Ready?"

She could not speak, but she nodded her russet head.

He passed before her up the rosy twilight of the hall.

Violet, following, her lips tight, her breathing suspended, her heart pounding against her breast, was dimly aware of her own soft footfalls sounding hideously loud, of the blast of light and laughter from the parlor.

Dyker flung wide the vestibule door.

"Good-night!" he called to Evelyn.

"Going? Good-night!" Violet heard the Englishwoman answer.

She heard Evelyn rise. She heard the front door open. She saw Wesley raise his arm.

She hurried by the parlor door, and then, instead

of turning to the stairs, gathered up her red kimona and ran through the vestibule, through a patch of soft, fresh darkness, and was tossed precipitately into a cab into which Dyker followed her just as the horse, under a quick blow, dashed madly up the street.

At the open cab-window the night air beat upon her fevered face. She drank it deep into her thirsting lungs. It was the wine of freedom.

XIV

RIVINGTON STREET

THE eastern end of Rivington Street is a hectic thoroughfare. Often it is so hectic as to be no thoroughfare at all, but only a tossing fever-dream, a whirling phantasmagoria of noisy shadows, grotesque and reasonless. It seems a street with a bad conscience, for it never sleeps.

The dawn, even in summertime, hesitates long before it comes shivering up from the crowded East River to drop a few grudged rays of anæmic light on Rivington Street. Already, out of the humming courts, the black alleys, and the foul passages that feed this avenue as gutters feed a sewer, a long funeral procession of little handcarts has groped its way and taken a mournful stand beside the fetid curbs; and soon, pausing at these carts to buy the rank morsels of breakfast that there is never time to eat at home, the gray army of the workers begins to scurry westward.

First come the market-laborers, with shoulders bowed and muscles cramped from the bearing of many burdens. Upon their heels march the pale conscripts of the sweatshops, their hands shaking, their cheeks sunken, their eyes hot from loss of sleep. Follow the sad-lipped factory-girls, women before their time, old women before their youth, and then the long line of predestined shop-clerks, most of them

still in short skirts and all of them, befittingly, in mourning-black. Swiftly they go, the whole corps of them, the whole corps strangely silent.

The street is not emptied of them before it is filled again, now by solemn children on their way to school, children whose gaze is fixed, whose mouths are maturely set, and whose voices, when they are heard at all, are high, strident, nervous. As these go by, the shops begin to do business: the cheap food-shops, the old-clothes shops, the shops that sell second-hand five-cent novels for a copper, and the pawnbrokers'. The shawl-hooded housewives clutter in and out, selling first that they may buy afterward, and continuing like ants swarming about an ant-hill until noon strikes and the children parade stolidly away from school for luncheon, and back again.

At that hour the underworld of Rivington Street enough recovers from its drunkenness of the night preceding to stagger forth and drink again. The doors of the shouldering saloons swing open and bang shut in a running accompaniment, and the highway rocks with it until a cloud of clattering two-wheeled push-carts swoops from "The Push-Cart Garage" around the corner and alights as if it were a plague of pestilent flies. Bearded Jews propel these, Jews with shining derbies far back upon their heads, who work sometimes for themselves, but more often for the owners of the push-cart trust, who squabble for positions in the gutter where an impotent law forbids any of them long to remain, but where, once entrenched, they stand for hours, selling stockings at five cents and shirts at ten, mirrors and vegetables, suspenders and lithographs, shoestrings



"Nowhere right away," answered Dyker. "Just stand where you are for a minute."

Then he turned to Violet.

"Now," he said, not unkindly, "I'm afraid I'll have to drop you here. It wouldn't do for me to figure publicly as an active agent in this case, you know. But you needn't worry. Just get out and walk to the next corner. Turn to your right, take the next cross-street to your left, go up the first narrow street you come to, and your friend's house ought to be about the third in the row. It will be a little dark, but you won't have any trouble finding it."

Violet hesitated.

"I hope I won't," she said.

"Surely not. If you have, just ask the way of the first policeman you see."

"Not a policeman, Mr. Dyker!"

"Of course, a policeman. He won't hurt you as long as you keep your cloak tight. Now, you're sure you've given me the right address?"

"I gave you the one the man gave me."

"Yes, but I mean you're not lying to me?"

Violet's wide eyes should have been sufficient denial.

"Why would I do that?" she asked.

"That's so; only I thought—well, I beg your pardon, Violet. You have my office-address on that card. I'll send for you in a day or two—be sure to be home every afternoon—and then we'll fix Madame Rose with the District-Attorney.—Goodby. Sure you're not afraid?"

Her gratitude would not permit her to acknowledge fear.

"Not afraid," she smiled, rather grimly.

"Then remember: the first street to your right, the next to your left, and then to your right again—third or fourth house in the row."

He opened the cab-door and alighted, holding out his hand.

She straightened her beaver hat, drew the folds of her dark cloak tightly over the betraying crimson of her kimona, and, helped by his grasp, followed him to the swarming curb.

"I—I don't know how to thank you," she said.

"Then don't try," returned Dyker, laughing easily. "You can make it all right with me when you testify against Rose."

She kept his hand a moment longer, partly in fear of the human multitude about her and partly in genuine gratitude.

"But I do thank you," she said.

Dyker, not too well liking the white light of publicity in which this little scene was being enacted, pressed her hand and dropped it.

"That's all right," he responded. "Just don't forget your promise." He stepped back into the cab. "Good-by, and good luck," he said.

"Good-by," he heard her answer, and then, with his head out of the cab-window, he saw her pause bewilderedly. "To your right," he cautioned.

He watched her turn. He saw her plunge into the crowd. He saw the crowd swallow her up.

"Take me over to my office," he ordered the driver, and added his address.

Once there, he dismissed the cab, climbed the steps of what seemed an old and modest little house, and,

opening the door and turning into the front room, lit a gas-jet the flame of which revealed an apartment surprisingly new and arrogant. The walls were lined with new bookcases holding rows of new law-books, and surrounded by rows of new chairs. The flat-top desk in the center, at which his stenographer sat by daylight, was a new desk, with new wire-baskets upon it, and a new telephone, to which Dyker now immediately proceeded and called a number.

"Hello," he said into the transmitter, adopting the low tone that he always used in his wired conversations. "Is that Schleger's?—It is?—That you, Ludwig?—This is Dyker.—Yes, good-evening, Ludwig.—Yes, pretty good, thank you. How are you, and how's business?—That's good. Mrs. Schleger and the babies all right?—I'll bet that boy's gained three pounds!—He has? I'm glad to hear it. You're a wonder.—Yes.—That's what I said. And, say, Ludwig, is O'Malley anywhere around?—He isn't?—Hasn't been in this evening?—Oh! Well, I wonder where I can find him.—You don't? Perhaps he's at Dugan's place.—No, it's not anything important: I just wanted to take a drink with him, that's all. He's sure to be at Dugan's or Venturio's, but I guess I won't bother. Ever so much obliged, Ludwig.—Good-by."

In spite of his word, Dyker did, however, bother. He called three other numbers in his quest of the political boss, and when he found him, the underling made a pressing appointment for an important conference on the next morning, though what it was that he wanted then to discuss he carefully neglected to *mention* over a telephone-wire.

He hung up the receiver in a glow of satisfaction.

"And now," he said, "I think I'll get away for the night. I don't care to have any arguments with Rose for a day or two."

Yet, even as he said it, the telephone-bell uttered its staccato summons. He stood uncertainly beside the desk.

"She wouldn't have the nerve to use the wire," he argued. "Perhaps it's O'Malley with more to say."

Again the bell rang, and his curiosity overcame his caution. He took up the receiver.

"Hello!" he said sharply, and then his tone mellowed, for the voice that came to him across the hurrying New York night was the voice of Marian Lennox.

"Is that Mr. Dyker's office?" it asked.

"It is the head of the firm himself," he answered, "and mighty glad to hear from you."

"I am glad you're glad," the voice pursued, "because I want to ask a favor."

"It is as good as performed. What is it?"

"I have been down town, and remained longer than I intended, and I want you, please, to take me home."

"I thought you were asking a favor, not bestowing one. Where are you?"

"At the settlement."

"In Rivington Street?" Wesley set his teeth as he asked it.

"Yes."

"Very well, I'll be over right away."

He rang off and left the office. He was sorry

that he had dismissed the cab, for he expected to need it when he reached the first stage of his journey; but the way was not long to the place that Marian had named, and, even had it been twice as far to the settlement, Dyker, who walked thither with the feet of chagrin, would not have remarked the distance.

In the midst of Rivington Street, in a house that used, long ago, to be a Methodist parsonage, a little group of devoted women are doing their best to redeem, by social activities, the people of the neighborhood from the benighted condition in which the people's lot is cast. This best has now been done for more years than a few, and the people, still considering it necessary to remain alive, and still knowing that to remain alive they must submit to the economic system imposed upon them, continue discouragingly unredeemed. But the devoted women, though they neglect the disease for its symptoms, persist as only feminine natures can persist.

They are college-bred women with the limitations and emancipations of their class; and they have a great deal to occupy their attention besides their essays in social entertainment. For the most part they pass their days in really practical investigation. One of them will inspect the public schools and impartially consider curricula and ventilation. Another will visit tenements and ask housewives personal questions for the tabular benefit of the Russell Sage Foundation. A third goes into the laundries of the best hotels and finds that these hostelries force their washerwomen to sleep twenty in a room. Yet, when *they* return to Rivington Street, these daylight in-

vestigators spur their wearied nerves to further exertion and go forward, not to teach the toilers the practical cause and remedy of the economic evil, but to form the boys and girls, the young women and young men, into reading groups, debating clubs, sewing circles, cooking classes, and elocutionary juntas. Their zeal is boundless, their martyrdom sadly genuine, and, if there is humor, there is something more than humor in their ultimate complaint:

"Some of our people we retain, but most of them slip away, and, even with the best of fortune, we seem, somehow, able to do so little."

Dyker knew the place by reputation. He had always scorned it for its own sake, and now he had come to hate it for Marian's. For want of a better term, it may be repeated that he was in love with Marian. Moreover, he wished the assistance that an early marriage with the daughter of a wealthy department-store owner would give him in the coming campaign. And, finally, his peculiar legal activities were already well enough known on the East Side to make it probable that any young woman entering the settlement would speedily learn of them.

After the night of the opera his cooler reflection had rejected Marian's plan of joining the Rivington Street colony as a fervently girlish dream destined to fade before the reality of action. He had decided that the best way to aid its dissipation was no longer to combat it, and he had even, during the months that had followed, seen Marian but rarely, and never alone. Occupied with politics and knowing the tactical value of restraint, he had not so much as pressed

his wooing. He had relied upon what he chose to describe as his sweetheart's basic commonsense to work out their common salvation, and had decided that, this commonsense being what he esteemed it, Marian was a woman more likely to be won by a Fabian campaign than by a Varric attack.

The point wherein these calculations erred was their underestimation of the momentum of a girlish impulse. That method of consideration which makes one slow to reach convictions works beyond the convictions and retards one from action upon them, once they are achieved, but the impulsive mind that bolts a creed unmasticated straightway drives its owner, in the creed's behalf, to the thumbscrews or the wrack. It is from the pods of half-baked opinions that there is shaken the seed of the church: Marian meant to keep to her purpose.

Perhaps Wesley's silence and the subtle sense of pique that it awakened played a part in this; perhaps the purpose was self-sufficient; but, in either case, Marian missed scarcely an evening at the settlement. Two of her former classmates were knee-deep in the work there, and what she saw and what they told her served only to confirm her. It thus happened that, anxious again to see him alone, and more anxious to let him know the endurance of her resolution, she had, on this evening, telephoned on the chance of finding him late at his office.

"Good heavens!" he gasped as she met him at the settlement's door. "What on earth are you doing in this part of town at this hour of the night? *Let me* 'phone for a taxi."

What, as a matter of fact, she had been doing was to listen to slim little Luigi Malatesta and fat little Morris Binderwitz respectively attacking and defending the proposition that Abraham Lincoln was a greater American than George Washington; but what she thought she had been doing was assisting in raising the lower half of society. Under this impression, her fine brown eyes shone with the consciousness of moral rectitude, her mouth was even more than usually firm, and her head even more than usually like some delicate cameo.

"One thing at a time, please," she imperturbably answered. "First, no taxicab. It isn't far to Second Avenue, which is quiet enough, and I want to walk for a few blocks."

She took the arm that he grimly offered, and he began to break his way through the noisy crowd under the flaring gasoline lamps of the push-carts. Coherent conversation was at first impossible, but Dyker felt a glow of pride as, with her fingers closed in tight trust upon him, he shouldered a passage for her, and Marian herself was not insusceptible to the thrill inherent in the situation. Nevertheless, the girl, as soon as they had turned northward, reverted to her former attitude; and the man, knowing well that all this meant that she was still determined upon a course necessarily delaying his wooing and perhaps resulting in his discovery, frankly resumed his opposition. He did more and worse: he swept aside all his method of silence, all his plans of conquest through non-resistance.

"Now, he said, continuing their interrupted talk, "I should really like to know what you, of

all people in the world, were doing on Rivington Street."

"I was there," she announced serenely, "because I have made up my mind that it is I, of all people in the world, who ought to be there."

"Marian,"—he almost stopped as he said it—"are you really in earnest about this fancy? Do you honestly mean that you are seriously considering any such chimerical course?"

He had, naturally, chosen precisely the tone that, were any additional incentive required, would have compelled her to resolution. Her mind, as it chanced, was, however, made up, and what he now said served only to turn her toward that feminine logic which assumes as done that which is determined.

"I am past consideration," she said. "I have already virtually begun."

"Marian! You're joking."

"I am simply stating a fact. Why do you suppose I have been staying in town this summer? I begin my real work at the settlement with the first of next week."

Her classmates in Rivington Street, could they have heard this, would have been pleased, but they would also have been surprised. Nevertheless, she at once mentally decided to make good her declaration.

In the darkness Dyker bit the lip that, under his short, crisp mustache, trembled with vexation.

"You really mean that?"

She bowed a brief assent.

"Then what, if you please, do you propose to do *when* you get there?"

As to that Marian found herself suddenly certain.

"You ought to know," she said, "how these people are living; you ought to know how the girls—hundreds and hundreds of them—are every week going into lives of shame and death. I mean to do what I can to stop them."

It would have been a hard thing for her to say to him had he not wrought upon her anger, and had not the freshness of her partial glimpse of earth's lower seven-eighths fired her heart with a blind inspiration. She had the partial vision that makes the martyr: a vision that shows just enough of an evil to confirm the necessity of action and not enough to prove how little individual action individually directed can be worth.

For the second time Wesley gasped. Here were depths in her of which he had not dreamed, and because he had not dreamed of them he would not admit them.

"But you can't!" he protested. "It is impossible that you should. It's inconceivable that a woman of your delicacy should go into such coarse work!"

"Is it better that it should be left to coarse women? It seems to me that there has been enough of coarseness in it already."

"But this—why, it's something that one can't even speak about!"

"Yes, something that we are not permitted even to mention, Wesley; and because we aren't permitted even to mention it, the thing grows and grows, night by night. It thrives in the shadow of our silence. They tell me that the liquor laws are broken, because nobody will mention it; that bestial men get rich in

it, because nobody will mention it; that in this city alone there are three hundred saloon dance-halls intended to furnish its supply, because nobody will mention it!"

Figuratively, Dyker threw up his hands in horror, but actually, like all desperate men, he seized at the straws of detail.

"Now, that just shows how wrong your view of the whole subject happens to be," he declared. "My work has put me in a position to know something about these dance-halls, and I know that they exist simply because the girls that go to them want them to exist—the girls, mark you; not the men. Why, the girls aren't taken to such places; they go of themselves, they pay their own admission, and it is the usual thing for a girl earning six dollars a week in a store to save fifty cents out of every salary-envelope for the dance-halls."

"Then you want me to conclude that the fact that they want to do the thing makes the thing right?"

"You don't understand——"

"Precisely; and so I mean to learn."

"You can't learn. No matter how closely you study this whole matter, you can't learn, Marian. How can a clean-hearted, clean-lived American girl ever get the point of view of these low-down, low-browed foreigners? It's the sort of thing they're used to."

"Before they begin it?"

"It's the survival of the fittest."

"Then can't some be made more fit to survive?"

"It's the law of life, and it can't be stopped."

"So was negro slavery the law of life. It couldn't be stopped either—until we stopped it."

"That is all theory, Marian; it won't work out in practice. The great point is that these unfortunate women, whether they become unfortunate through the dance-halls or anywhere else, are simply not our sort of clay: they're not Americans."

"They are human beings."

"A pretty low example."

"And they are more Americans than your ancestors or mine were three hundred years ago."

"Nonsense. They're different, I tell you—different. Seriously, I know what I am talking about: I speak from systematic investigations, reports, statistics. The very latest investigation shows that all but about thirteen per cent. of these women were either born abroad or else are the children of foreign parents. It is always the newest immigrants that swell the ranks, and of course the newest immigrants are our lowest type."

"I don't see that all this alters the question."

"Well, it does."

"The lower they are, the more plainly it is our duty to raise them."

"My dear Marian, how can you raise them when you don't understand them?"

Marian shook her handsome head.

"You *will* come back to that," she said; "and all that I can answer is that, not being utterly stupid, and having come to understand a few abstract problems, I have hopes of mastering something so close at hand to me and so concrete as a fellow human being."

"What, for instance?" asked Wesley, "can you understand of the typical Jewish girl of the East Side?"

"A good deal, I think. They were talking about that type at the settlement this evening. We were looking from the front windows at an endless stream of Jewish girls tramping home from the factories where they worked to the tenements where they slept. Somebody said there are nearly four hundred thousand Jews living east of the Bowery; that in most Jewish families the ambition to which every comfort must be sacrificed is the education of the boys; that for this reason the girls must work and are worked until there is nowhere else in the world where so much labor is got out of young women, and yet that the Jewess that is not married and a mother before she is twenty is regarded as a family disgrace. It seems to me, Wesley, that the case of those girls is pretty easy to understand. It seems to me that they are on the horns of a rather ugly dilemma."

Dyker's cane whipped the air as if it were striking at the heads of opposing arguments.

"You accept as gospel," he said, "everything that is told you by anybody but me. It isn't a pleasant subject, but, if you insist upon facts, let me tell you that there are troops of Jewesses who come down here from the upper Ghetto and walk the streets for no other purpose than to get money for their wedding trousseaus."

It was a blow at her conventions, and she shuddered; but she stood by her guns. They had crossed down Twenty-sixth Street now and they turned into

the quiet of Madison Avenue, among comfortable houses and silent churches, as she answered.

"If they do that," she said, "it is because they have to."

"Have to? Why on earth should they have to?"

"I don't know, but I know that the very use they make of the money shows what they do is only a means and not an end."

"Are trousseaus so necessary that these girls have to sell their souls for them?"

"Souls have been sold for less. Even you and I make considerable sacrifices for things that other people in other classes would not think needful at all."

He had done his best to bridle his annoyance, but now he could bridle it no longer. He was wholly sincere in his inability to take seriously either the girl or her point of view, and now, though he felt as if he were riding a hunter at a butterfly, he charged blindly.

"Oh, please don't let us jump at sentiment and theory," he remonstrated; "let us keep our feet on figures and fact. The figures grow with the population: they always have so grown and they always will so grow. And the plain fact is that, though a few good people have been trying to stop this thing for four thousand years, they have never succeeded in doing anything but soiling themselves in the attempt."

"I know that," she frankly acknowledged, "and I don't know what it is that's to blame; but I know that there isn't any evil that hasn't some cure if we can only find it out."

"Then why not leave the search for a cure to the experienced?"

"I shall; but I propose to become one of the experienced. I mean to give my time, at least for a while, to first-hand study. Perhaps then I shall learn enough to know that it's useless for me to go on, but I shall keep trying to go on until I am convinced that there isn't any use in the trying."

"That's absurd, Marian—simply absurd. The condition is, after all, one that must be dealt with by the law, and I tell you honestly that, as yet, even the law is helpless."

"Has the law really tried? Has it ever attempted, for instance, to do anything to the men that take these immigrant girls at the dock and make slaves of them?"

"Yes, it has; it has tried just that. In Chicago two men were arrested for taking a couple of such girls—they had brought them from New York—and when the case was appealed, the United States Supreme Court found that, though importation of girls was a violation of federal law, yet the federal law providing a punishment for merely *harboring* such girls after their arrival was unconstitutional."

Marian's voice faltered.

"Is—is that true?" she asked.

"Absolutely," said Dyker. Like most lawyers of his generation, his ideas of what was right were limited only by the final decisions of what was legal, and if the Supreme Court of the United States had, by even a majority of one, declared that the sun moved around the earth, Dyker would have first denied and then forgotten all previous astronomy.

"Absolutely," he repeated, and awaited her capitulation.

But Marian did not capitulate. She merely drew a long breath and answered:

"After all, that, of course, is just a small portion of the big question, and the only way it moves me is to lessen my opinion of the Supreme Court."

It was Wesley's turn to gasp, and he did so. He had always suspected that these college-settlements were hotbeds of Socialism and Anarchy—two theories that, to Dyker, were one and the same—and now he had his confirmation.

He was too cynically wrong upon one side of their subject to realize how emotionally wrong she, in her hope of accomplishment through personal appeal, might be upon the other. But here was a concrete denial of his one sincere conviction, and, though he was at last calm enough to see that he must not allow this conviction to wreck his suit, he was not so calm as to maintain a clear judgment. It was plain that Marian would not be turned from her experiment. His best course was, he then reasoned, immediately to put on record his opinion of its futility, even to quarrel with her in defense of that opinion, and then, when experience brought the awakening upon which his own worldly experience counted, to stand ready to profit by the inevitable reaction that would most likely show the perfidy of the women whom Marian hoped to help, detract from the credibility of any gossip they might recount concerning him, and end by winning him his wife.

"All right," he said sharply, "it is perfectly use-

less to talk reasonably to anybody that can take such a view of so simple a matter. Here is Thirty-fourth Street. I think we had better walk over to Broadway and get that taxi."

The worst thing that a man can impute to a handsome woman is a lack of intellect. Marian's cheeks flushed.

"I quite agree with you," she replied. "I am utterly incapable of arguing with anybody that so confuses law and justice."

"Very well," said Dyker; "but I want you to remember what I have said upon the subject as a whole. When you have trusted these women and been betrayed by them, when they have poisoned your mind against all the principles you have been brought up to believe, when you have left the world of sentiment and bruised your poor hands with hammering at the door of fact, then you will acknowledge that I have been right. I am not angry——"

"Oh, of course not!"

"I am not angry, but I am firm. I only ask you to believe that I shall never be far away from the settlement, and that you have only to telephone for me when you have need of me."

Marian compressed her lips to a more severe firmness, and the ride from Thirty-fourth Street to Riverside Drive was made in silence; but the following Monday found her, against all parental protests, enlisted as a settlement-worker in Rivington Street.

XV

IMPARTIAL JUSTICE

MICHAEL M. O'MALLEY, political boss, held his court, that next morning, in the back room of Ludwig Schleger's saloon on Second Avenue, and, because it was to be a busy day and there were many pleas to be made and many petitions to be received, he came early to his post.

As he swung majestically up the street toward his destination, his carefully pressed light gray suit flapping in the warm breeze about a figure so tall and so thin that any suit approaching "a fit" would have achieved only a caricature, his progress was almost regal. Pedestrians stepped to one side as if the bulk of his unseen dignity demanded a far wider strip of the paved channel than was required by his visible physique. Workingmen touched their grimy caps, the overseers of the street-repairing gangs bowed respectfully, children on their way to school bobbed their heads, and, at a corner, Officer Riley, concluding a substitute week "on the day turn," offered his best military salute. The keeper of every news-stand received a nod; the bootblacks outside of each saloon were given a brief word of greeting; there was not a beggar but got some largess, and of the several men that hurried up with a request, hinted or expressed, all were permitted to walk a few steps in the august presence, all received a brief,

civil phrase of agreement, postponement, or consideration.

"Trouble about your place?" It was thus that O'Malley interrupted the voluble plea of a saloonkeeper that approached him. "I'll have that cop, Conners, looked into. His eyes are too new; they see more'n they're paid to see. Who's tendin' daybar for you? Johnny Mager? All right, if they take the thing up front, I'll see that you get your license transferred in his name. Keep your shirt on an' leave it to me."

He had not paused in his walk; he had not raised his quiet voice or quickened his slow speech; but the suppliant retired satisfied, reassured.

Indeed, O'Malley's face was one that, if it would not inspire confidence in a stranger unacquainted with the man's reputation for guarding the interests of his dependents, at least bore the unmistakable stamp of that knowledge of life which is power. It was sallow and long, with a long thin nose and long thin lips, and cold eyes that thrust as swiftly and as deeply as the stilettos of Mr. O'Malley's Italian constituents. He smiled often and his smile was bitter; he spoke little and his words were short; but his servants had early learned that he was as sure to keep his promise as he was ready to give it, and that, so long as his tasks were well done, he was an indulgent master.

He entered "Schleger's place" with the air of an owner, nodded to the white-jacketed man behind the polished counter and before the polished mirror, and gave a quick, firm pressure to the plump, outstretched hand of the fat and grinning proprietor.

"All well with the family?" he asked, smiling his wry smile.

Ludwig Schleger beamed assent.

"Anything doing last night?"

"Nothin'," replied Ludwig. "'Ceptin' Mr. Dyker called you on the telephone. Wouldn't say what he wanted."

"I know that. Haven't had any more rough-housing?"

"No," grinned Schleger, wisely; "the boys are all got wise that they can't meddle with my new night-man."

"I see. Name's Hermann Hoffmann, ain't it?"

"That's right."

"Hum. Well, he may be useful. You must get him to move into this precinct, or else register him from here. Votes right, of course?"

"I ain't asked him yet."

"Do it to-night."

O'Malley walked to the dimly lighted back-room, hung with racing prints and framed lithographs advertising a wide variety of whiskeys. He drew a wicker-bottomed chair to a stained round table, and sat down.

The proprietor brought him a glass and a syphon of seltzer—the boss's only drink—and disappeared. The bar-keeper came with a handful of black cigars for which O'Malley paid with a bill, refusing the change, and also disappeared. Then the door of communication was shut and guarded, admission being denied to all persons not properly accredited, and the quiet, thin man in the light gray suit, now sipping his seltzer, now reflectively adjusting his bright

blue tie, which bore a brilliant diamond pin, and always slowly smoking, began his conference with such callers as he had granted appointments.

They came in force—alone and in groups—all manner of men by the main entrance and a woman or two ushered through a side door. This one was promised a reward for duty to be done, that one assigned to the performance of a delicate piece of diplomacy. Now and then a short, sharp, cold reprimand for negligence or failure sent away a caller whipped, penitent, trembling; and here and there release was promised for a wayward son sent to "The Island," or a line of credit written for use at a grocer's shop.

Wesley Dyker came early. He paused at the bar for a drink to stiffen his courage, lingered a little longer until a predecessor had been dismissed, and then, his lids lowered, entered, alone, with a succinct account of Rose's attempt to play a double game.

When he had finished the narrative, O'Malley sat for a while gazing unconcernedly at the blackened ceiling, and smoking quietly.

"Well?" he said at last, and turned the sharp thrust of his gaze upon his caller.

Dyker, who was sitting opposite and who had been served with a drink of whiskey, tossed off the liquor in order to gain time to muster an answer for this unexpected query.

"Well," he at length replied, annoyed at thus being put into a position where he must make his proposition in the form of a request, "are you going to stand for that sort of thing?"

"I dunno."

"*I* wouldn't stand for it," said Dyker.

"If you had my job you might have to."

There was another pause. The long fingers of O'Malley tapped gently on the table. Dyker shifted uneasily in his seat.

"I wouldn't stand for it a minute!" he at last broke forth. "And what's more, you can have her up for something worse than the disorderly-house charge. She has one kidnapped girl in her house now, and I've got another that escaped from her, and who's ready to testify."

An instant later he was sorry that he had spoken so readily.

O'Malley tilted back against the wall until the front legs of his chair rose six inches from the floor. He blew an easy ring of smoke.

"You seem to have come here with your case all prepared," he remarked.

Wesley flushed and stammered.

"You see," he began, "I mean that I got hot at this, and I said to myself that it was only right to let you know this woman wasn't to be depended upon."

The forward legs of O'Malley's chair came down with a loud thump. Wesley started, but the boss only impaled him with another cold glance.

"See here," said he, "before we can do business we'd better altogether understand each other. Just what is it you want?"

"I—I think I've made that clear."

"*I* think not."

"I want this Légère woman pinched for running a white-slave place. I want to see her taught a

lesson that the other women down her way will profit by."

"Of course you do. But what do you want for yourself?"

The issue was too conclusively joined to permit of further evasion. Wesley took his courage in his hands.

"Why, I've not made any secret of that," he said, "and neither has headquarters. I want the next election for magistrate. I told you that long ago."

He launched his declaration with the bravado of weakness at bay, and then breathlessly awaited the answer.

Michael O'Malley leaned back again in his chair, clasped his hands behind his head, and closed his keen eyes, reflecting.

His was an hereditary office, but, unlike most men that inherit power, he had inherited also the abilities that had gained the power. His father, who had begun life as a policeman, had been a great exemplar of the political uses of an element fully realized only by the expert politician: the human element. The name of O'Malley had now for a generation been, south of Fourteenth Street, a magic title. To a legion of men, women, and children, it stood for a sort of substitute, and very near and practical, Providence. It implied contact, fellow-feeling, the personal relation. Acting upon the politician's axiom that whatever is acquired is right, the elder O'Malley had risen from the street force until, after zealous party-work, he had been promoted, in the palmy days of policy and the pool-rooms, to the "Gambling

Squad," where he had performed the astounding financial feat of saving eight times his monthly salary, had retired, and grown annually richer and stronger through politics, without once losing the esteem of his voting underlings, or once seeming to cease being one of them. Since his father's death, now that gambling had declined and prostitution had risen as political material, Michael, who had been brought up to the business, had filled the place of that genuinely mourned parent. Without any publicly acknowledged means of support, even with no headquarters save the daily shifted back-rooms of saloons, he had extended and increased the power and the fortune that had been left to him. He was known as the friend of the distressed; he was recognized as benefiting with his left hand the poor whom he unimpededly robbed with his right. To those who were without money or without assistance he was always accessible. He made festival with the merry and was readily sympathetic with them that mourned. By small gifts at all times and large gifts in days of emergency, by acting as the adviser, the employment-agent, the defender, from the law, of the people whom he exploited and upon whose weaknesses and vices he throve, he won and held fast both the tribute and the allegiance of the vicious and the weak.

It was a mighty position and yet one that, in moments like the present, was inherently delicate, one in which the fortunate man must move warily lest in gaining a new friend he lose an old. It is all very well to be temperate and profit by drunkenness, to be abstemious and take money from prostitution;

it is easy to give presents at Christmas and picnics in summer when the giving is in reality only paying a small rebate to wives for drunken husbands, to mothers for daughters stolen. It is easy to find a place in the municipal government for the man that stuffs a ballot-box for you, or the procurer that registers your fraudulent votes from the houses of his customers; but it is fatal to punish, for what may be a passing disloyalty, anyone that your world, perhaps ignorant that offense has been committed, regards as having been placed by a careless Heaven under your protecting wing,—fatal, that is to say, unless you acquire something more than you throw away.

Of all this, though scarcely with such frankness of phrase, Michael O'Malley made thought before he gave Dyker the reply for which that clever young lawyer was waiting. Behind his closed eyes he weighed the chances carefully: the things to be gained against the things that might be lost.

Then he thoughtfully lit another black cigar.

"You've got to keep out of personal relations with these women," he yawned.

Dyker bit his lip.

"I don't have them," he replied.

"Yes, you do. Cut 'em out. Un'erstand?"

Surprisedly, angrily, Dyker found himself bowing obedience, like a school-urchin detected in some breach of academic discipline.

"A woman with a past," continued O'Malley, "is all right for the present, but a slow mare in the futurity."

"I dare say you're correct," said Wesley Dyker.

With a single blow of the whip, the master had demonstrated his mastery.

O'Malley smoked a while longer in silence.

"Now then," he at last pursued, "about this magistracy. You think the boys'll stand for you?"

"I think they will," Wesley replied, with humble mien, but rising assurance. "And I think it ought to make the ticket look better to the uptown people to have—if you will pardon my saying so—my sort of name on it."

O'Malley grunted.

"Don't you worry about the looks of the ticket, or the value of your sort of a name," he said. "The kid-glove game is played out; it's only the monkey who's always hopping about on his family-tree."

Dyker's courage ebbed again, but he knew that to stand upon his dignity was to be overthrown.

"At all events," he persisted, "I am pretty well known hereabouts by this time, and I think honestly that I am pretty well liked."

O'Malley nodded. He knew more about that than Dyker knew. Dyker had, with more or less direct assistance from O'Malley's own headquarters, already won some prominence for himself, and had been of some use to the organization, in that sort of legal-practice which is a highly specialized branch of the profession on the lower East Side. The purpose of that branch is simply the protection of the criminal, especially the criminal engaged in the procuring or confining of slave-girls, but its methods, far from being unusual, are merely a daring extension of the methods that, within the last decade, have increased in popularity among the seemingly more

respectable practitioners. Evidence is manufactured or destroyed, according to immediate needs; favorable witnesses are taught favorable testimony; postponements are secured until a politically indebted judge is on the bench. There follows a formal bellowing against what are called invasions of inalienable personal rights, and then there comes a matter-of-course acquittal. With Dyker's ability in this sort of work O'Malley was thoroughly familiar; for this man's party-services he was sufficiently grateful, and with the chance of the lawyer's rise to a popularity that would be of still further help he was well satisfied.

"If you'd be elected," he at length reflectively remarked, "you'd have a mighty responsible position, Dyker."

"I know that."

"There would be a good many ways"—O'Malley knocked, with great deliberation, the ash from his cigar—"a good many ways in which you could help the party—if you'd be elected."

He seemed to be discussing, disinterestedly, a purely abstract question; but Dyker did not miss his meaning.

"I shouldn't overlook them," he said.

"And, *if you'd be elected,* there'd be a lot of ways in which you might hurt—the party."

"I scarcely think you have any just cause for apprehension upon that score, Mr. O'Malley. I think that my record speaks for itself. My record is regular; it is an open book to the whole city——"

"Never mind that, Dyker; it's an open book to *me,* anyhow."

"I'm aware of it; but then——"

"All I want to know is two things."

"And they are, Mr. O'Malley?"

"First, are you the kind that lose their head over a good thing and land in jail?"

"Does my law-practice seem to indicate that I should be likely to overstep legal limits?"

"No, I guess it don't. But you can't always tell; we can't afford no hogs; and that sort of a man gives all his friends a black eye."

"But I say to you——"

"And next, I want to know, Mr. Dyker, whether you're the kind of a man that don't forget them that put him where he's at."

The low, slow spoken sentence ended with a sudden click of Mr. O'Malley's long, vulpine jaws. He leaned quickly forward across the table and fixed Wesley with the stiletto of his eyes.

Dyker met that gaze steadily. He leaned, in his turn, toward O'Malley, and his own voice dropped to a whisper. There was an exchange of a dozen sentences, and the two men had arrived at a perfect understanding: Dyker was as good as elected.

O'Malley pressed the call-button.

"Billy," he said to the bar-keeper, "have somebody run out and bring in Larry Riley off his beat. I want to see him."

As the bar-keeper nodded and disappeared, Dyker started to rise.

"I don't know whether Riley had better see me here," he said. "Rose's house is on his regular beat."

"All the more reason to sit tight," replied the

comprehending O'Malley. "What's the use of gettin' square with a person unless the person knows who done it?"

"But I am not sure that Riley would be a safe man to confide this to. He's naturally a friend of Rose's."

"He's more of a friend of mine."

The officer entered a minute later, his flushed face gravely attentive, his helmet in his hand.

"Riley," said O'Malley, "you know this Légère woman."

"I do that, Mr. O'Malley, sir."

"Well, she's been gettin' too gay. When you go off duty, you tell Jim to have her place pinched to-night."

Riley's cheeks became a shade less red.

"It's sorry I am to hear, sir, that she's been misbehavin' of herself," he murmured.

"Sure you're sorry. Tell Jim to get there early: we don't want nobody but the women."

"What"—Riley wet his dry lips—"What's the charge?"

"Runnin' a white-slave joint. You're to be sure to get a girl she has in the third floor back."

O'Malley's tone had been conclusive; it indicated that the interview was at an end; but the big officer stood twirling his helmet between his large hands.

"Mr. O'Malley, sir?" he began.

"What is it, Riley?"

"There's nothin' else?"

"Nuthin'."

"An'—there ain't no other way out of it for Mrs. Légère?"

"No, there ain't. But you can report her house and get the credit yourself, Riley."

"Thank ye kindly, sir; but if ye don't mind, sir, I think I'd rather let someone get it as nades it more. Ye see, Mr. O'Malley, sir, this here Mrs. Légère has been powerful kind to me, an'——"

"All right, have it your own way."

"I—I can't do nothin' for her, Mr. O'Malley?"

"Not this time. That's all, Riley.—And, Riley——"

The thin boss stood up and crossed to the bulky policeman. His voice was still low and soft.

"Yis, Mr. O'Malley?"

"If that woman gets wind of this an' makes a getaway, I'll have your uniform off you so God damned quick you'll wish I'd skinned you alive."

"Yis, Mr. O'Malley, sir," said the officer. "No fear of that, sir."

But he left the audience-chamber with a heavy heart. He lived the life that he was compelled to live, and he did what he was ordered to do, but he could not without compunction turn upon one that had bought a right to his own and his superior's protection.

There was not a little silent bitterness in his heart as, later, returning to the station-house, he thought upon these things. He remembered the days when he had been new upon the force. Those were the days when the popular tide had turned against gambling and, amid the raids that meant the breaking of steel doors, the pursuit of offenders through secret passages and across steep roofs, it was for a

while possible for a policeman to retain his ideals. But he remembered also how, when the ruling powers had thus been forced to destroy the nests where once they had gathered golden eggs, the long arm of necessity swung slowly backward until it paused at the point where it had since remained and, because the eggs must be gathered somewhere, the police were expected to gather them from the aeries of the vultures that preyed upon women.

Riley had not minded, every pay-day, handing over to the appointed heeler the five dollars wherefor he received a receipt for a dollar and a half as dues to the political club to which he was expected to belong. For quite some time he had been content with closing his eyes to saloons that were opened on Sundays by proprietors that were powerful, and with allowing others to profit by the rewards of his voluntary blindness. But at last there came the first baby in the Riley home, and then the second, and the wife's long illness; and then assessments were increased and, finally, after many a broad hint from the men higher up, he was given plainly to understand that he must either hand over a goodly portion of money, every week, from the offending women on his beat, or else lose his usefulness to the force.

After that, he took what he must and kept what he could. He had no trade on which to fall back; his domestic and political expenses grew annually, and, as an evasion of the former meant financial ruin, so the shirking of the latter meant a charge lodged at headquarters, a speedy hearing, and an automatic dismissal. Even when a non-partisan man

was put at the head of the department, that official's practical power was nullified by the fact that the mayor, a party-man, was behind him and could remove him at a moment's notice, and that behind the mayor was the organization that had made and could break the mayor. No individual, so far as Officer Riley could see, was personally to blame, was himself a free agent; but the whole collection of individuals were the irresponsible parts of a gigantic machine—from the inner council of Tammany to their spies in every municipal department—which, if ever broken by the recognized party of opposition, must be so thoroughly rebuilt and so precisely operated in accordance with mechanical lines that the change would signify only the casting out of the irresponsible parts and their replacement by parts equally irresponsible. Riley could look no farther, and, even could he have seen that the remedy must be a remedy of conditions, he could have done nothing to free himself.

At the station-house he delivered the commands that O'Malley had given him. There his words produced consternation, but no thought of disaffection. The patrol-wagon was ordered to be in its stable, ready to leave at the given hour, and Riley, as the officer regularly assigned to night-work on the beat in which stood Rose's house, was forced to remain to accompany it.

"An' see here, you men,"—these were the words with which the brief instructions were concluded—"you see to it nobody gets ahead of you. This is O'Malley's job, an' it's got to be done right."

In the underworld of every city, news, however,

travels even while it is in the making, and in no direction does it travel more swiftly, just as in no other does it travel more indirectly, than, when the slave-trade is concerned, it travels to the traders. Riley was careful to remain in full view of the sergeant's desk from the moment the arrangements were made until the time of execution—he would not have dared to communicate with the friends that had thus swiftly become the enemy—none of the wagon-crew were seen to leave the stable, to use the telephone, or to speak to a passerby, and yet, shortly before the appointed time, through a certain club-room over a not far distant saloon—a club-room much affected by young men in Max Crossman's profession—there soon spread the definite tidings that Rosie Légère had just been "piped off."

The swarthy and brilliant Rafael Angelelli heard the word, and straightway, beyond all doubting, confirmed it. With the unheeded easy evening breeze tumbling his uncovered oily locks, he ran to the nearest booth-telephone, and hurriedly called Rose upon the wire.

"Eet ees comin'!" he whispered excitedly into the transmitter.

Rose's voice replied with stolid assurance.

"What's comin'?" she asked.

"*Poliziotti*—cops," replied the Italian, finding more and more difficulty with his English as his panic increased. "Eet ees Angel talkin'.—I jus' getta da *nuova*.—They maka da pinch!"

"Quit your kiddin'."

"Naw. *Veraménte. Crêdi tu!* Queeck!

His fright hit the mark.

"How'd it happen?" demanded Rose. "Who's back of it?"

"Dees Meest' Dyker."

"You fool Dago"—her voice grew shrill with fear and anger—"can't you do nothin'?"

"Naw. 'E's been to O'Malley."

"You're a hell of a help! How about Riley an' the rest?"

"Naw. O'Malley maka them do thees."

"It's that slut Violet, that's who it is! That's gratitude for you. I've been half expectin' trouble since she got loose last night.—How long have I?"

"I don' know. Maybe five min'; maybe one."

"My Gawd!"

"Don' hang up! Leesten: firs' t'eeng you do getta da new girl out. Eef they getta dees new girl you go——"

But there came a quick click from the other end of the wire. Rose had ended the conversation.

Angel, still hatless, hurried through the few intervening streets and darted into that street to which he had just been speaking.

Already the early New York twilight had descended, and the block seemed, at first glance, to have turned to slumber. One distant, spluttering arc-light succeeded only in accentuating the gloom. From the patch of darkening sky into which the roofs blended, a bare handful of pale stars twinkled weakly, and on both sides, from corner to corner, the uniform, narrow houses rose in somber repetition, each with its brief, abrupt flight of steps, each with its shuttered windows, each silent behind its mask.

All this the Italian saw with accustomed eyes, and

then he darted into the shadow of an areaway, because he saw also that, brief as had been his journey, Riley had arrived before him.

In a little knot of wise children, a patrol wagon, its sophisticated horses unconcernedly dozing, stood before Rose's house. An officer was in the doorway; hurried lights shifted from behind one bowed shutter to another, and gradually Angel became conscious that, all along the street, frightened faces were peeping from stealthily lifted blinds.

For quite some time the watcher waited. At last the big figure of Riley and a companion appeared in the open doorway and spoke to someone in the wagon. Through the evening quiet their voices came distinctly.

"Ready?" asked Riley.

"All ready," came the answer.

"We've got the madam an' the nigger, an' the four of thim, but I belave they must have turned the new girl loose before we got here."

This time the reply came from within the house, and it came in the tones of Rose, raised high in anger and in blasphemy:

"You're a dirty liar, Larry Riley! There never was another one, an' you know that as well as I do! Just you wait till I tell the judge what you *do* know, you damned, low, double-crossin' sneak! You bastard, you!"

Riley and his companions turned and ran into the vestibule.

"Just you wait," the cry continued. "Just you wait, you thief, you——"

The voice stopped as suddenly as it had started.

There was another pause, a longer one, and then Angel, bending as far as he dared from his hidden corner, saw the two officers come quickly out with their hands upon the arms of two cloaked women, whom they helped into the dark recesses of the patrol-wagon. They went back and returned with one more. A fourth followed; then a fifth, and a sixth. Two policemen appeared, evidently from positions that they had been guarding in the rear of the house. The man on the steps closed the door and locked it. All the policemen climbed to the wagon. The driver gathered up the reins. The tittering children scattered wildly. The horses woke up and started away at a brisk trot.

Impartial Justice was beginning her task.

XVI

SANCTUARY

TO leave the protection of Dyker and the kindly secrecy of the cab, and then to leap into a tide of alien human beings and swim against them in a strange and terrifying sea, had required the last grain of courage and strength that was left in Violet's sapped body and cowed soul. It was only by the momentum that Wesley's calm directions had given her, and quite without consciousness upon her own part that, with her cloak gripped tightly about her, she tottered forward, buffeted and shrinking, to the first corner, wheeled to the right into a street comfortingly darker, turned again into a still narrower and quieter way, and then came to an uncertain stop before what seemed to be no street at all, but only a small black rift among the beetling walls of brick.

Empty as was the way compared with Rivington Street, it was what, had she not seen the former thoroughfare, she would have considered oppressively full. Urchins walked hand in hand along the gutters, push-cart men cried their wares over the cobbles and, in the hot night, frowzy women crowded the house-steps. A clatter of voices, of foreign tongues and unfamiliar forms of English, rattled out the gossip of the neighborhood, and a few steps away, a belated hurdy-gurdy shook forth a popular tune.

Violet cowered against the nearest wall. She was uncertain as to how to proceed, and she was afraid to stand still. There seized her an unreasoned terror lest all this seeming escape might be some new trick leading into some new trap. A policeman passed with heavy tread, but, unmindful of Dyker's assurance, the girl drew, trembling, as far away from him as she could. Then, when her straining eyes saw him turn at the next corner to retrace his steps, she made sure that he was coming back to recapture her, and, now desperate, she faced a pair of solemn children slowly approaching from the opposite direction.

The six-year-old boy to whom she especially addressed herself shook an uncomprehending head, but his wiser companion, a very dirty little girl of seven, made proud answer.

"He don't to speak no English," she said. "He only can tell things out of Jewish. But I tells you. That there's your street right behind you. Yiss, ma'am. An' your house is by the two on that there side."

Violet's lips tried to form a word of thanks. She turned, as the girl had ordered, into the rift among the brick walls, found that, once it had traveled beyond the depth of the house before which she had been standing, it opened to a width of a few additional feet, and so, almost creeping through the stygian passage in which shone only one far-away lamp, she felt her way to the second door.

It was partially open, and a jet of blue gas in the hallway burned overhead. She could see several doors in the shadows, but all were closed. She heard

a dragging step coming down the stairs. She drew against the wall and waited.

The step was slow and uncertain. It seemed to consider well before each movement forward, but it had a character that reassured her. It was the same sort of step with which her father was wont to return home after his occasional carouses, and she knew that whoso walked in that fashion was, so long as one kept out of reach, not greatly to be feared. She remained hidden until the step drew nearer, until the dark bulk of the drunkard slowly massed itself out of the surrounding darkness, until it had brushed by her. Then she spoke.

"Can you tell me," she asked, "if there's a Miss Flanagan lives here?"

The passerby was not in a condition where voices from nowhere seemed remarkable. He stopped and, evidently not clear as to just whence this particular voice proceeded, addressed the air immediately before him.

"I can so," he said.

"Then will you, please?"

"Will I what?" responded the passerby, determined that the air should be more specific.

"Will you please *tell* me?"

"Tell you what?"

"Is there a Miss Flanagan lives here?"

"There is that. There's three of her, an' wan of thim's a Missus. Good-night."

Awkwardly he touched his hat to the air and stumbled out into the alley.

Violet breathed hard. She had never in her life before been in a tenement-house; but she knew that

now she must seek a door through which some ray of light gave hint of waking persons within and, knocking, of them inquire anew. Around her, all the doors were forbidding, so, timidly and with a hand tight upon the shaking rail, she softly climbed the decrepit stairs.

At the second floor a shaft of yellow light stopped her.

Here was a door that was open, and beyond it, by an uncovered deal table on which stood a rude kerosene lamp, sat two figures: the figure of an old woman, her gnarled hands clasped loosely in her aproned lap, her dim eyes gazing at the sightless window, and the figure of a young woman, her hands beneath her round chin, her wide eyes on a naked baby quietly sleeping in a clothes-basket at her knee. The floor was uncarpeted, the walls unadorned, the room almost bare of furniture; but on the face of her that looked into the past and in the face of her that looked into the future there was peace.

A quick stroke of pain stabbed the onlooker's heart, but she dragged herself ahead and, not to disturb the baby, spoke without knocking.

The old woman turned, and Violet noticed that the eyes which could see so far behind were blind and could see no step forward. The mother, however, spoke kindly and gave the directions that the girl needed; but Violet, wanting to say something about the baby in return, and, able only to murmur formal thanks, pursued her climb upward.

She found at last the door that she was certain must be Katie Flanagan's, but, when she had found it, all power of further motion suddenly ceased.

Weakness, shame, and fear swept over her like a cloud of evil gases from an endangered mine, and she swayed against the panel before her.

Inside, Katie and the shirtwaist-maker, just ready for bed, heard the faint sound without and, opening the door, caught the almost fainting figure in their arms. The dark cloak dropped open, disclosing the crimson kimona beneath, and this, awakening Violet's one dominating passion—the terror of detection and consequent recapture—roused the fugitive a little. She staggered away from the assisting hands, wrapped the cloak tightly around her, and leaned, panting, against the wall.

"Miss—Miss Flanagan?" she gasped.

Katie nodded her black head.

"That's me," she said.

"I'm—I'm the—I'm Violet."

The Irish girl comprehended quickly. With Irish tact she refused, just then, to hear more; with Irish volubility she burst into exclamations of pity, and with ready Irish sympathy she took Violet in her strong arms.

"Put her on my cot," said Carrie, and they led her there.

They took away her cloak, for she was now too weak to protest, and, though they did pause in awe before the crimson kimona, they hurried to make their guest comfortable. The Lithuanian Jewess moved silently and swiftly about with that calm competence which characterizes her people, and Katie, fanning the white face and chafing the thin hands, continued to croon condolences.

"There now!" she at last smiled, as Violet's blue

eyes opened. "Sure you're yourself again entirely. Don't say a word, not one word, an' just tell us whatever 'tis you might be wantin'."

"Whiskey," gasped Violet.

The girls looked at each other.

"That's all right," said the Jewess, quietly; "I can spare it"—and she handed Katie some small change.

The Irish girl flung a shawl over her head, and ran down the stairs. She went into the side door of the nearest saloon, entered a narrow compartment, passed the money through a hole in a partition, and was given a small flask partly filled. Within five minutes she had returned, and Violet, drinking the contents of the bottle at a single draught, began to revive.

"Are you hungry, darlin'?" asked Katie.

Violet shook her russet head.

"No," she answered, "I couldn't eat, thanks. I'm only just played out."

"Poor dear, you look it. But you're all right now, an' you can rest as long as you like. Don't you bother. Don't you worry. Don't you be afraid. You got away without any trouble, did you?"

"Yes," said Violet, and because she was still unable to frame her lips to adequate thanks, she gave them as much of the story of her escape as she could give without mention of the name of her rescuer, who had warned her that he must not be publicly known to figure in the case.

"A man?" echoed the cynical Katie. "An' he didn't ask nothin' in return?"

"No."

"He must be worth knowin', that man."

"He only wants me to go somewhere an' swear to all Rose done to me."

"Oh!"—Katie's tone showed that she could now account for the gentleman's generosity.—"Well, don't you do it."

But Violet could not follow her.

"Why not?" she asked.

"I don't know just why; but don't you do it."

"I promised," said Violet.

"Och, listen to the poor dear!" Katie appealed to her fellow-lodger. "I wonder is it long she thinks he'd be keepin' his word to her."

Her own word freshened the ever-abiding terror in the runaway's heart, but Violet said no more about it.

"Would you have much to swear to?" asked Carrie, seated on the foot of the cot.

"What do you mean?" Violet parried.

"She means, Violet——" began Katie.

The fugitive, in her new surroundings, shrank from the name.

"Don't! Don't call me that!" she said.

"Sure an' ain't it the name you gave me yourself?"

"I know, but I don't want to hear it ever again. Call me Mary; call me Mary——"

And there, face to face with a new danger, Violet came to a stop. Her captivity had taught her much of bestiality, but it had taught her besides only that some unknown, tremendous power hated her; that she was debased and must never, at whatever cost of further suffering to herself, permit her degradation

to attach to her family; that she must escape, but that she must also wholly divorce herself from all that life had meant her to be. She had no thought of the future; she had only a realization of what had been and what was.

"Mary what?" asked Carrie.

"Mary Morton," lied Violet. Perhaps she had heard the name before; perhaps the easy alliteration brought it first to her mind. At all events, she reflected, one name was as good as another, so long as it was not her own.

"Would you have much to swear to?" Carrie was continuing. "Is it as bad as they say—there?"

Violet looked at the round, serious face before her.

"I don't know what they say," she replied; "but it's worse than anybody *can* say. There's a lot of it you can't say, because there's a lot of it there ain't no words ever been made up for. Just you pray God you won't ever have to find out how bad it is."

They looked at her and saw on her the marks of which she was not yet aware.

Katie bent over and swiftly kissed the fevered forehead under its tumbled russet hair.

"You poor woman," she said with unintended implication, "an' how many years did you have to stand it?"

"It wasn't years; it was—it was only weeks."

"What? An' they could get a grown woman like you?"

Violet tried to smile.

"How old do you think I am?" she asked.

Katie made what she considered a charitable reply.

"Twenty-five?"

"I'm not seventeen."

Katie began to busy herself about the room, and Carrie turned her head.

"Ah, well," said Katie, "you're tired out, an' it's 'most mornin'. We must all go to sleep now."

"I only put on long dresses in April," said Violet.

But Katie seemed not to hear her. She hurried the arrangements for the night.

"Sleep as long as you like in the morning," said Carrie; "and if you can wear any of our things, wear 'em. We have to get up early, but don't mind us."

The latter injunction was unnecessary. Though Violet had for some time been excited by her escape, that excitement had already given place to utter exhaustion. The lamp had scarcely been extinguished before, with throbbing head, she passed into a sleep that was almost coma, and the lamp that was burning when she opened her aching eyes was the lamp of midmorning.

She was alone and afraid to be alone. Her head seemed splitting. She saw the milk and rolls that Katie had set out for her on the oilcloth-covered table, but her stomach revolted at the thought of food, and her poisoned nerves cried out for alcohol. She got up and managed to pull on some of the clothes belonging to her two hostesses.

From her first glance at the mirror, she drew back in bewilderment. During all her imprisonment she had been used, through her gradual change, to compare her morning appearance with that of her fellow slaves; but now there was fresh in her mind the standard, not of those pale and worn, though

often fat and hardened, convicts, but of the pair of healthy girls that had, the night before, sheltered her; and from that standard her very image in the glass seemed to withdraw in horror. Lacking rouge, her cheeks, once so pink and firm, were pasty and pendant; her lips hung loose, her blue eyes were dull and blurred; even her hair appeared colorless and brittle. Little lines had formed at the corners of her eyes; her skin seemed rough and cracked, and other lines were already faintly showing from her nostrils to the corners of her mouth.

She sat down on the cot, sick and shivering. When she noticed a small pile of bedding in the corner behind the gas-stove, she shook at the memory of another such pile on another terrible morning, and by the time she had realized that one of her friends must have slept there in order to provide an extra couch, she was too wracked by suffering, physical and mental, to feel, at once, any great gratitude. The fever throbbed in her wrists, beat in her heart, hammered in her brain. She did not dare go to the street for whiskey or medicine. At every sound on the stairs she started up in the assurance that her keepers had come to recover her, and when, in the early afternoon, a loud knocking sounded on the door, she fell, in unresponding silence, before Katie's flaring lithograph of Our Lady of the Rosary.

"Hello in there!" called a not overcautious voice. "I want to talk to Miss Violet!"

Violet raised her clasped hands to the printed face before her.

"Don't let them take me!" she whispered in a

prayer to that visible sign of a power she had never before addressed. "Don't let them take me!"

"Open up, can't you?" the voice insisted. "I know there's somebody inside, an', honest, I'm not going to hurt you!"

Violet's hands fell. The voice, she realized, was at least unfamiliar.

"Come on," it wheedled. "I'm all right; I'm from Mr. Dyker."

"What do you want?" she inquired.

"He said Miss Violet would know," came the answer. "He said I would be expected—that it'd be all right if I just told you I came from him."

Violet had not forgotten Katie's warning, but she was unable wholly to doubt the one man that had befriended her. She opened the door.

The pink-and-white young clerk that entered was much embarrassed, and his hostess, in her fever, did not ease him. Nevertheless, after many hesitations on his own part, and more repetitions and explanations made necessary by Violet, he at last convinced her that he did indeed come from Wesley Dyker, and that there was waiting around the corner the cab that would convey her to an office where she could begin the redemption of her pledge.

Almost in a dream, and too ill now much to care what happened to her, she followed the messenger. Dazedly she greeted Dyker in the cab; confusedly she left that conveyance for an office where she answered interminable questions put to her by another young man who, she was told, was an Assistant District Attorney; vaguely she heard Dyker assure this official, as she affixed a signature to an offered paper,

that Wesley would himself guarantee her appearance whenever it was required, and when she was at last wheeled back and had climbed the stairs and, alone, fallen again upon Carrie's cot, the only one of recent facts concerning which she was at all certain was that she had said she was a native of Pittsburgh and that her name was Mary Morton.

Katie and Carrie, returning together, found her flushed and babbling nonsense. When they approached her, she did not recognize them, and then, for an hour, they could get from her only the monotonous repetition:

"Don't let them get me! Don't tell them my name!"

It was eight o'clock before the patient, quieted by sympathy and stimulated by whiskey, could be taken to the nearest drugstore, and there, as soon as the experienced druggist set eyes on her, he refused to prescribe.

He beckoned Katie to a corner.

"That girl's got to go to a hospital," he said; "and if I was you, I wouldn't lose much time in getting her there."

Katie the competent lost none. After another drink to stifle possible protest, Violet was taken upon a car to Sixteenth Street, and was then walked quickly westward. During all the way she did not speak, and, when she reached the hospital's fortunately empty receiving-ward, she was nearly unconscious.

A white-capped nurse received the little party, the young doctor, in shirt-sleeves and duck trousers, hov-

ering in the background among the glass shelves agleam with instruments of polished steel.

"What's the trouble?" asked the nurse.

"It's that that we've come to find out of you," answered Katie.

The nurse nodded to the doctor.

He came forward and made a quick examination.

"Bring this woman inside and put her on the table," he ordered. "And you girls, stop where you are."

Her head thrown back, her dry mouth wide, and her russet hair falling, the unresisting Violet was carried behind a door that shut smartly after her.

Too scared to speak, Katie and her companion stood outside. Five minutes passed. Then ten. After a quarter of an hour, the door reopened.

"What's this patient's name?" he asked.

"Mary Morton," said Carrie.

"Where does she live?"

Katie gave her own address, and the doctor, a pad of printed forms in hand, noted both the answers.

That done, he paused and bit his pencil.

"Married?" he asked quickly.

"Who?" parried Katie. "Me?"

"No; the patient."

"Well, now," began Katie, "I can't see as that's——"

But the calm voice of Carrie interrupted.

"She is married," she said.

The doctor pursed incredulous lips.

"Where's her husband?" he demanded.

Katie, who had caught the need of the moment, jumped into the breach.

"Where a lot of them are," she responded, "an' where as many more might as well be, for all the use they are to their poor wives."

"Where's that?"

"Faith, it's you, sir, ought to know: you're the man."

"Dead?"

"Run away."

"Not much later than yesterday, did he? Well, I must find her nearest relative or friend. Are you either?"

Katie's face lenghtened.

"Och, doctor," she said, "you don't mean to—but it can't be that there's goin' to be a baby!"

The young interne grinned. Then, serious again, he answered:

"No, there is not. I only wish it was so simple. Where are her folks?"

"She's none in the world, an' no money. The hard truth is, doctor, that it's a charity-patient she'll have to be."

"That's all right; but are you her nearest friends?"

"Yes, doctor."

"That'll do, I guess. She's a nervous wreck—among other things. We've first of all got to get her round from that condition, and then I'll have to secure either her own or your permission, as her nearest friends, to do something more."

"More?" repeated Katie. "Ain't it bad enough

as it is? What more do you mean to do to the poor —girl?"

"I don't mean to do anything myself, but this is a common enough kind of case around here to make me certain what the resident surgeon will do: he'll operate."

XVII

"A NET BY THE WAYSIDE"

HERMANN HOFFMANN, passing one evening to the little clothes-press behind the bar in Ludwig Schleger's saloon, and putting on the canvas coat that was his badge of office, heard the voice of the proprietor calling his name, and turned to see that stout German-American beckoning him to enter the back-room where, a month before, O'Malley had held with Wesley Dyker that conference which had proved so disastrous to Rose Légère.

He walked through the open door, whistling his Teutonic melody. He had not that fear of his employer which most employees have of the man for whom they work. Schleger had proved himself lenient and good-natured, and Hermann, whose cheerful round face and easy smile did not interfere with the use of a knotted arm and a mighty fist, was quite aware that there was no complaint justly to be made against the manner in which he performed his alloted tasks.

"Hoffmann," said Schleger, smiling, "you're all right."

"Sure," grinned Hermann.

"Yes," pursued the proprietor, "I been thinkin' about you that you sure have made good."

"I'm glad you vas sadisfied, Schleger."

"I am satisfied; but I think you need a little more

time off now an' then. I haven't got nothin' to do this evenin'. I'll take your place."

Hermann's eyes brightened with unaffected pleasure. It had not always been pleasant to work in the nights when Katie was all day busy in the shop.

"Thanks," he said.

"Yes," nodded Schleger, benignantly; "it will be like old times for me. You take a night off."

"Shall I start out righd avay?"

"Certainly.—Of course you understand I'll want you around here the day of the primaries."

Hermann nodded.

"And Hermann, there's somethin' else I've been meanin' to talk to you about, and kep' forgettin' till O'Malley reminded me of it again this afternoon."

Hoffmann, pulling off his white jacket, stopped with arms extended.

"O'Malley?" he said in a strained voice. "Vat's dot man got to do vith me?"

"Well, you know he don't miss no tricks nowheres, an' some time back I was tellin' him what a good man you was, an' he said we ought to get you a little more active for him. A fellow behind a bar can do a whole lot that way, you know,—an' make a good thing of it."

"I know," replied Hermann, ripping off the coat, "but I ain't no politician."

"Nobody said you was, but all the fellows help a little."

"Sure; only I don't."

"Why not? We want to do well for the slate this time. Wesley Dyker's on it; you know him; he's all right."

"I ain't no politician, Schleger."

This stolid attitude plainly began to puzzle the proprietor.

"Don't be a fool, Hoffmann," he said. "The boys all have their eye on you, an' O'Malley don't forget any of his friends."

"Schleger, I got my own friends, und I make my own friends. I don't vant nussing I don't earn from nobody."

"But that sort of thing won't look right," argued Schleger. "You see, you're registered from here——"

"No I ain't, Schleger; I'm registered from my own blace."

"Well, I didn't know that; you didn't tell me, an' so I registered you from here."

Hoffmann's pink cheeks became red. He folded his coat neatly over his arm.

"Vatch here, Schleger," he began. "I ain't no politician. I don't care——"

But he bit his lip and mastered himself to silence.

The proprietor saw this and appreciated the self-control that it manifested. There had been a time when he had felt as Hermann felt now, and so he was not disposed to use harsh argument. He came close to Hoffmann and, still smiling, dropped his voice to a whisper.

"That's all right," he said, soothingly. "I guess I know how you look at it. Don't say that I said so, but we'll let the matter drop if you only lay low a little and keep quiet. You know the brewery's backin' me in this saloon, an' you know, with the brewery pushin' me all the time for its money, I

couldn't run the place a month if I didn't keep the side-door open Sundays. Well, then, how could I keep the place workin' Sundays if it wasn't for O'Malley? Just try not to be openly again' him, that's all."

Hermann did not commit himself, but his tone had softened when, in reply, he asked:

"Und should I take to-night off?"

"Certainly you should. Go along now, an' forget it."

He went, but as he walked down the avenue, "Die Wacht Am Rhein" issued from his lips to the time of a funeral-march.

His sole consolation lay in the fact that, in the recent glimpses he had secured of Katie, that young lady had begun to evince signs of relenting from her former attitude of celibacy. He knew that she had gradually ceased to descant upon the impossibility of his supporting a wife, and he thought that she was entertaining hopes of a promotion in the shop to a position where her own earnings, added to his, would make a comfortable living-wage for two.

What he did not know—and this for the excellent reason that Katie would not tell it to him—was that, whatever their prospects for the future, both Katie and her roommate were still engaged in that battle with poverty and temptation which had lessened scarcely one whit since its beginning. For the former the fortunes of war were less than ever favorable, and for the latter the most that was expected was the maintenance of her stand in the face of every armed reason to surrender or retreat.

The strike dragged along its wearied length.

Popular sympathy, which had aided the shirtwaist-makers in their former rebellion, had lost its interest in the cause, and, as the newspapers said less, the employers became more demonstrative. Hired thugs guarded the factories and beat whatever young women dared, by the simplest words, to plead, in public, with the scab laborers. When these battles occurred the police, knowing well the interests of their masters, arrested the mere girls for assault and battery upon the thugs, forcing them to remain, if detained, on benches with women old in immorality and crime; and the magistrates before whom these dangerous female criminals were hailed, not forgetting which party to the suit could vote at the coming election, would often send the offenders to the Reformatory or the Island, where they could no longer interfere, or would impose fines calculated still more to deplete a strike-fund already pitiably shrunken. Some of the unionists had already laid down their arms and returned to the factories; more had gone over to another enemy and disappeared beneath the dark current of the underworld. The rest—and Carrie was among the number—must soon come face to face with starvation.

Katie's difficulties, though as yet less physical, were scarcely less poignant. She found that she was rarely left long in one portion of the Lennox shop. From the chief woman's-hosiery department, she was shifted, without warning, to the handkerchief counter, and thence, again with no explanation, she was sent to help in the main aisle at a table where there was a special sale of stockings at reduced prices.

At first these frequent shiftings appeared to result from no apparent cause. She was fined as much as the other clerks, but no more than they, and she could in no wise account for the changes. But at last she noticed that after a shift for the worse the sacrosanct Mr. Porter would usually happen by and open a conversation, and then she remembered that, before such a shift, this same side-whiskered gentleman had generally made overtures, and that those overtures had not been well received. The theory arising from these observations she resolved to confirm. After the next move she made deliberate eyes at the man she detested, and she was next day promoted, with a twenty-five cent increase of pay per week, to the silk-stocking counter. From that day she saw her warfare developing into a dangerous game of hide-and-seek in which Mr. Porter was "It," and from that day dated her increasing tendency to reconsider the determination not to marry Hermann Hoffmann.

For Violet, meanwhile, the young interne's prophesy had been fulfilled. Four days after her admission to the hospital there had been performed upon her that operation which had been made necessary by her servitude, but to which, had she been consulted, her fears would never have allowed her to consent. For three weeks she lay in her narrow bed among other sufferers, and, when at last the fiction of discharging her as "cured" had been accomplished, and the five-cent carfare donated by the hospital to charity-patients had been given, she had been met by Katie and Carrie, and had tottered between them to their room.

During another week she had now rested there. Her eyes were still sunken, dull, dark-rimmed; her cheeks white and transparently thin. The knuckles of her fingers seemed to have grown larger, and her hands were nearly transparent. But her lips, though bloodless, had gained a new firmness. Clearly or deeply she could never think, without help from a stronger and better mind; yet she had made what use she might of her long leisure and had resolved, more or less definitely, upon what she would do with her life.

"I went out an' walked a block by myself yesterday," she confessed to her two friends early on the evening of Hermann's political discussion with his employer; "an' I didn't get any tired an' wasn't hardly any scared. Now I want you to take me for a longer walk to-night an' then by to-morrow I'll be all right."

They protested that she must not spur her convalescence, but she was determined. It was, she knew, impossible for them much longer to support her, and the last of her one ten-dollar bill had long ago been spent.

"I'll tell you what we might do," Carrie at last suggested. "There's some sort of a concert over at the settlement to-night. We might go to that. I used to know some of the ladies there, and there's always a chance that they can get you a job."

While she was speaking Hermann's whistle, more cheerful now than when he had left the saloon, sounded on the stairs, and Katie, surprised and glad, opened the door to his knock.

"Late to your work again," she said, with a smile

that belied her. "How'll you ever be holdin' that job, anyhow?"

The newcomer's only answer was a courageous and unrebuked kiss. He turned to Carrie.

"Vat you sink of such a vay of meetin' me?" he appealed. "My boss gives me a nighd off, und I haf seen my girl not fur ten days und den——"

He paused as his unrecognizing eye fell upon Violet.

"Egscuse me," he began. "I didn't see——"

"Of course you didn't see it was your old friend Violet that was an' Miss Morton that is," interrupted Katie, with a quick desire to shield her charge. "You're gettin' that near-sighted I wonder how you can tell a whiskey-glass from a beer-stein."

Hermann hurried forward in rosy embarrassment and saved Violet from rising. He took her frail hand in his big paw and poured out a tumbling stream of polite lies upon the matter of her health.

"I guess it ain't quite as good as you say," replied Violet; "but it soon will be. Have you—I didn't get no news while I was sick. Have you heard anything about—things?"

"You knew Rose's place was pinched?"

"Yes, Katie told me that."

"Well, dey had some trouble gettin' pail fur her. Efferybody vas afraid fur to do it vith O'Malley after her. Still, dey vorked it somevays und nobody thought but she'd jump it und run avay; but she didn't. She tried, but O'Malley had central office men keepin' eyes on her, und she can't leaf town."

Katie and Carrie were busying themselves in the

preparation of the supper, and the German seated himself beside the invalid.

"Mr. Hoffmann," she said, "I've been tryin' to think of lots of things while I've been sick, an' I'd like to know how it is that women like Miss Rose are allowed?"

He looked at her, hesitating, but her eyes were frankly curious.

"Dot's von long story," he answered in his slow tones, "un' dem as can tell it best is most all in deir houses or in deir graves, or else, in de streets."

"Then I guess I was lucky to get away."

"If you don't mind me sayin' it—yes, miss."

"But don't the girls get free when the houses are pinched?"

"No," said Hermann, as gently as he could; "dey don't get free. Ofer to de Night Court a voman has taken five s'ousand to a blace she has, und how many sink you didn't go back to de vork again? Less'n von hundret und fifty."

"I don't see how they could," said Violet.

Hermann could not see how they could do anything else, but he only shrugged his broad shoulders.

"They don't last long anyvays," he remarked.

"You mean they die soon?"

"Effery five year all de girls is new: it's as sure as life insurance."

The girl shuddered, but mastered herself.

"Don't mind that," she reassured him. "I want to know—honest. Katie and Carrie won't be bothered——"

"We can't hear a word you're sayin', darlin'," laughed Katie.

"An', honest," Violet concluded. "There's some things I think I've got to learn so's I can see it—see it *all.*"

She appealed, it happened, to an authority. Hermann supplemented his Marx with facts and statistics of a later date, especially upon the point at issue, and he was only too glad to find in Violet the listener that he could never discover in Katie.

"You're righd," he said; "und the only pity is dot more people don't try to more about it learn. If dey did, maybe ve'd all open our eyes some."

And he proceeded to open Violet's eyes not a little. He told her of the hundreds of thousands of girls that are annually caught in the great net; of how five thousand new ones are every year needed to maintain Chicago's standing supply of twenty-five thousand; of how Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, San Francisco—all the cities and the towns—are served proportionately, and of how, above all, from the crowded East Side of New York, there are dragged each week hundreds of children and young women no one of whom, if sold outright, brings as much as a capable horse.

"Some ve bring in," he said, "und some ve send out. Ve take from Italy, und ve send to Sous America. From all ofer the vorld ve take, und to all ofer the vorld ve send."

"You don't always blame the girls?"

"Plame dem? A girl as lived by us, she did tucking in a undervear factory. She has coffee und a roll fur preakfast, tea und a roll fur lunch, von biece of bacon und von egg fur supper effery nighd. Ten hours a day in a bad smelling room, crowded

vis ozzer girls, she runs dot machine. Part de year she has no vork, because always de factory does not run, but vhen de years ends, dot machine, makin' four dousand stitches a minute, she has tucked dree miles of undervear und got paid dree hundred dollars. Do I plame such a girl if she easy comes to belief a paid veasel as makes lofe to her und says he marries her und gets her avay from a factory?"

"All of the girls don't come from such hard jobs though."

"So? Look now!"

He took from an inside pocket a fistful of soiled envelopes and shuffled them until he found one on which he had transcribed some figures.

"Yesderday afternoon to dis Astor Library I found a report vat vas made by people sent out by de State of Massachusetts. It got a kind of census from four dousand vomen in sixty different cities, all ofer. Before dey vent bad, five hundret vas garment-vorkers, und eight hundret vas rope-makers, milliners, laundry people, paper-box, cigar und cigarette makers, candy-box packers, or vorked in textile mills or shoe factories. All dem, see, vorked in de poor paid trades, und a hundret und sixteen come from department-stores, und dot's as bad as Katie'll tell you. Vorse yet de job of house-servant—sixty per cent. vas dot. Und all de rest—all de ozzer sixty-two per cent.—vere girls who hadn't had not jobs, und dey had to live und couldn't no ozzer vay earn a livin'!"

"Then you think," asked Violet, "they wouldn't go wrong if they could get decent work at decent wages?"

Hermann looked at her quickly.

"Vould you?" he asked.

She shivered and shook her head and Hermann, seeing that the heat of his zeal had led him into a personal appeal that all his normally slow instincts prompted him to avoid, hurried back to the safe ground of generalities.

"Nobody vat knows," he said, "could belief it. Nobody vat knows could belief girls'd go into such a life, or once dey got into it stay dere, because dey vanted to. Vell, vat den? Ve must find out vhy is it dey gets in und vhy dey stay. It is because all de whole luckier vorld lets dem be kep' fast, und, first und foremost, because all de whole luckier vorld lets dose factories dey come from be bad blaces, und couldn't gif dose ozzer sixty-two-per-cent girls no ozzer vay to earn a livin' yet."

Violet thought again, as she still so often thought, of Max.

"An' what about the men that start them?" she inquired.

Hermann brought his heavy fist down upon his knee.

"Dem too!" he said. "Dem is de vorst mens in de vorld. If I can hate any man, dey is him. It makes my red blood to steam und my skin to get all brickly to see dem or sink of dem. But I know dot dey, too, are results of conditions, und dey sink dot dey are doing kindness to de girls by not letting dem go to chail or starve. De vorst mens in de vorld—next to politicians as lets dem live und takes most dot dey earn! Und de politicians demselves are only vat dot big system as makes us all vork for

less as ve earn, und makes us all pay more as ve can—only vat de big system makes dem!"

Violet understood but partially; yet she had seen enough to know that the slavery must have its political side, and it was concerning this that she now asked.

That Hermann made wholly clear. He told her the story of the growth of political parties, the development of political machines, the necessary preying of these machines, in every city, first upon gambling and then, as that passed, upon prostitution, and of how this meant both money and votes.

As he talked, she learned how this brought into being the "cadets"—the followers of the low heelers—who scoured their own and other towns, hanging about the doors of factories, tenements, shops—wherever the life was so hard as to drive those who lived it to despair—themselves impelled by economic conditions, by the choice between hard work and small pay on the one hand and base work and better pay on the other, and themselves forced into the "gangs" of childish mauraders while at the primary schools, and so trained upward, step by step, to the "gang" of the politician. She learned how, after the last outcry, a popular leader had struck a cadet, in the presence of the press-agents, and then, when this one blow was taken as the end of the infamous relation, had quietly joined with his fellows in strengthening that relation as it never could have been strengthened with the attention of the public upon it. And she learned how the result had been a whole criminal confederacy, with its capital in the poorer quarters, bound together politically and finan-

cially, with its officers, its agents, and its regularly retained lawyers, at once to defend and to attack.

Out of his own observation, Hermann told her of the saloons that were in reality the clubs of these procurers. He sketched the methods of procuring false bail-bonds, of influencing magistrates, juries, and even judges, and of turning upon the few conscientious policemen with suits charging oppression and false arrest.

"O'Malley, und dese ozzer mens like him ofer here make sometimes all of sixty dousand a year," he declared, "und de people lofe dem because dese O'Malleys take deir daughters durin' twelve mont's und gif dem coal fur four."

"An' no one person is to blame?" asked Violet in amazement.

"I vish dere vas, but dere ain't."

"So there ain't no way out of it?"

"Von vay—und only von. For de single time badness makes poverty, ninety-nine times poverty it makes badness. Do avay vith poverty. Reorganize de whole of de industrial system; gif effery man und voman a chance to vork; gif effery man und voman effery penny dey earns. So only you do avay vith poverty, so only you do avay vith unhappy und discontented homes und unhappy und discontented people, und so only you do avay vith badness."

He was in the midst of his subject when Katie served the scanty supper, and he would have had neither time nor inclination for the mere eating had not his sweetheart sternly ordered him to be silent. But, as soon as the meal was over and the few dishes washed, he continued his talk to Violet as, with the

two girls ahead of her, she leaned heavily on his arm all the way to Rivington Street.

The concert was, it must be confessed, interesting chiefly to the women that had promoted it, the young people that took part in it, and the relatives of the performers, who succeeded or failed vicariously. Stiffly seated in the cleared gymnasium, a little ashamed and wholly ill at ease, the audience, drawn from the neighborhood and from among the friends of the settlement-workers, bore it, however, with commendable fortitude. They heard an amateur orchestra play "La Paloma" out of time; they heard Eva Aaronsohn read an essay on "A Day in Central Park"; they heard a promising soprano solo spoiled by fright, and a promising baritone not yet escaped from the loosening leash of boyhood. Morris Binderwitz delivered a hesitating oration upon Abraham Lincoln, as culled from his former debate regarding the great emancipator, and Luigi Malatesta, having consulted the same original sources, repeated by rote a ten-minute tribute to the military genius of George Washington. There was a duet, a piano solo—a simplified version of "O Du Mein Holder Abendstern." Everything was conscientiously applauded, nearly everything was encored and then, amid a scraping of chairs and more strains from the amateur orchestra, the ordeal came to an end.

As the crowd slowly dispersed, Carrie made her way to the side of one of the women-workers with whom she had some slight acquaintance and, after the formal catechism upon "how she was doing," made her plea for Violet. She told, of course, nothing of the girl's story, nor was anything asked. It

was enough that she should say that her friend was fresh from the hospital, was in need of a position, and, though still weak, was able to do light housework.

The woman to whom this appeal was made called Marian Lennox to her side and, with a brief explanation of what the girl had just said, introduced Carrie.

"Didn't you tell me," she asked, "that you'd heard to-day of somebody that needed an extra servant?"

Marian had heard of such an opportunity. The word had not come at first hand, and the housewife was personally unknown to her. She was sure, however, that the place was entirely estimable, and she at once gladly gave the address, to which her co-laborer added, upon strength of Carrie's assurances, a recommendation.

Violet was brought over and presented, and when Marian saw the girl's wan cheeks and dull eyes, and read there the plain tokens of suffering, her own fine face shone with sympathy.

She drew Violet aside.

"Have you ever done housework before?" she asked.

"Only at home, ma'am," said Violet.

"Well, you'll like it, I'm sure. I can't see why all you girls are so foolish as to go into factories. Housework is so much more healthy and safe, and it's just what women are made for. It pays so well, too. Even if you can't cook, you can scrub and clean and help and get three dollars or more a week for it, and board, too."

"I think I'll like it," Violet assented, knowing in her heart that she would like any work that gave her a living and protection.

"Then be sure to come to see me after you're settled," said Marian.

She was now wholly immersed in the work of the settlement; but, though she had undertaken no distracting outside investigation, her indoor duties had thus far brought her into touch chiefly with children of the neighborhood, and from them, wise beyond their years as they were, she had learned only enough to feel that she had not yet come into touch with the great problems that her young heart was so eager to answer. In this first chance to give what she conceived to be practical help, it seemed to her that she was at last getting near to the heart of what she sought.

How near she had come to the heart of another problem, and how that problem was involved in the problem of her own life, she little guessed as she smiled into Violet's grateful face and, exacting another promise that the girl should report to her in any difficulty, bade her good-night.



XVIII

IN SERVICE

THE house to which, next morning, Violet, still weak and still afraid of her enemies, made, with many timid inquiries, her slow way was in West Ninth Street, near Sixth Avenue. It was a four-story, grimy, brick house, with rows of prying windows through which no passer's eye could pierce, a dilapidated little yard in front of it, and a bell-handle that, when pulled, threatened to come off in Violet's fist.

The woman that answered this uncertain summons much resembled the building she inhabited. She was tall, and she had a sharp face just the color of the house-walls. The spectacles high on her beaked nose gleamed like the windows and, like the windows, conveyed the impression that they saw a great deal without permitting any outsider to look behind them. Her once formidably austere black dress was rusty, and her hands were so lean that Violet felt sure they must stretch when one shook them.

"What do you want?" asked this woman in a voice that cut like a meat-ax.

"Are you Mrs. Turner?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

"I heard you needed a girl."

"Where'd you hear it?"

"At the college-settlement in Rivington Street."

The woman's mouth tightened.

"Don't see how anyone there come to know aught o' me," she said. "Got a reference?"

Violet, beginning to tremble lest this chance should slip away from her, fumbled after the note that had been written for her, and finally found it and handed it over.

Mrs. Turner's gleaming glasses read it twice, plainly suspecting forgery. Then she calmly placed it in her skirt pocket.

"Where's your home?" she next demanded.

"In Pittsburgh."

"Hum. How much do you expect?"

"Sixteen dollars," quavered Violet, who had received instructions from Katie.

Mrs. Turner shook her head vigorously.

"Won't do," she said. "Can't pay it. Twelve's my best, and when I have a cook—I'm out of one just now—all you have to do for it is to scrub and sweep and clean the house, wash dishes, and wait on table. How long did you stay in your last place?"

Mrs. Turner gave another skeptical "Hum" as Violet answered:

"Two years."

"Will you take it at twelve dollars, or will you not?" asked the woman, sharply.

Violet had been told to descend gradually and not to accept a cent under fourteen dollars a month; but she was no haggler.

"I'll take it," she said.

"And good pay, too, considerin'," commented Mrs. Turner. "I dunno. It someways don't look reg'lar. Got your trunk over to the settlement?"

Violet explained that she had no trunk; that she had just come from the hospital and had as yet had no opportunity to replenish what had been a sadly depleted wardrobe.

"Hum!" said Mrs. Turner.

In the penetrating glare of the impenetrable spectacles she studied the white face before her.

"You wait a minute," she concluded. "Not inside. Out here on the stoop."

She came outside herself and closed and locked the door.

"I'll be back soon," she said, and Violet dumbly watched her lank, hatless form stride to Sixth Avenue and turn the corner.

True to her word, Mrs. Turner was not long gone.

"I guess it's all right," she announced, as she reopened the door to the house. "I 'phoned that woman to the settlement. She was out, but a friend answered and said the reference is *genuwine*. She described you so's I'd be sure. Looks queer of me, p'r'aps, but a person can't be too careful in this town."

The gleaming glasses seeming to search her soul for a reply, Violet said that she supposed a great deal of care was necessary.

"Try to get along without it," responded Mrs. Turner, "and you'll mighty soon find out."

That ended preliminaries, and Violet, agreeing to send for her few belongings, began work without further formality.

She discovered that Mrs. Turner was a New Englander, who conducted a boarding-house in a manner that sensibly stirred the servants' sympathies in favor

of the patrons. Just now the season had greatly decreased these, but the absence of the cook—it was a chronic absence—left plenty to be done.

Violet had to rise with the sun and attend to the kitchen fire. She had to help the mistress in the preparation of every meal, and of the serving of every meal and the washing of all dishes she was left in solitary authority. She made all the beds, she emptied all the slops, she swept the floors, beat the rugs, cleaned the windows, polished the stove, and scrubbed the steps. Even in the scant hours free of actual work, she must still be within call of the door-bell and Mrs. Turner's voice: the service was continuous from dawn until ten o'clock at night.

It would have been, upon a frailer nature, a terrible tax, but, fresh though she was from the hospital, Violet, her sturdy stock standing her in excellent stead, managed so to stagger through it that her wracked nerves seemed actually to benefit by her physical exhaustion. Her lot had all the horrors of the average disregarded under-servant and yet, when she crept to her stifling attic room at night—a room ventilated by only a dwarfed skylight—she slept soundly and well.

The situation was one that could not, however, long continue. Mrs. Turner was a pious woman and as such knew that there must be what she described as "somethin' sneakin'" about any maid that could bear her ill-temper. Long experience of one servant after another leaving the house in anger, had not only innured the good lady to such losses, but had ended by really creating a sort of appetite for the kind of condolence that she secured from her neigh-

bors when without servile aid. It was therefore with almost a desire for the worst that she endeavored to delve into Violet's past.

This course of innuendo, suggestion, and cross-questioning, pursued by day and night, through work and rest, in strength and weariness, ended one afternoon when another boarder had departed, taking three towels with him, as is the custom of departing boarders, and when, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Turner secretly felt that she could no longer afford a maid.

"Where," she asked, meeting Violet on the stairs, "is them towels as was in Mr. Urner's room?"

"I don't know," said Violet.

"Well, they was there this morning, before lunch —I seen 'em myself—and now they hain't."

Violet recalled that Mr. Urner had been to his room in the meantime and had then left forever.

"Hum," said Mrs. Turner; "but you see the soap's gone too."

For some reason ungiven, the landlady plainly thought that the theft of the soap—perhaps because of Mr. Urner's personal habits—was proof positive that Mr. Urner could not be the thief, and that Violet must be. The girl was not in love with her work, but she was immensely comforted by the shelter it gave her, and she now throbbed with terror at the thought of its loss.

"I didn't take it, Mrs. Turner," she pleaded, "honest, I didn't."

"I didn't just *say* you did," replied the landlady; "but you can't blame me if I think things, the way you come here.—Where'd you say your home was?"

The question was hurled so suddenly, and was accompanied by such an uncommonly strong glare from the penetrating spectacles, that Violet's slow brain tottered. For the life of her, she could not think of the city that she had formerly mentioned.

"Well"—Mrs. Turner's foot beat sharply on the floor—"that ain't a hard question, is it? Where'd you say you come from?"

In desperation, the girl named the first city that her lips recalled.

"Philadelphia," she murmured, and realized at once that this was wrong and that her tormentor knew it.

"You said Pittsburgh last week, miss," clicked Mrs. Turner. She raised a knotty finger. "Now I ain't sayin' you took that soap nor yet them towels —mind you that—but I am sayin' you lied. Me and liars ain't good company: you'd better go."

The tears came to Violet's eyes. They overflowed and she broke down. In three short sentences she had confessed enough for Mrs. Turner to guess the entire truth, and had cast herself upon the woman's mercy.

But Mrs. Alberta Turner's straight bosom was no pillow for the unfortunate. Rugged as it was, it was no rock of safety. She drew her black figure to its greatest height; she called upon all her religious experience for backing, and upon all her study of the Bible for phraseology, and she launched at the girl a sermon the burden of which was that, as she would have been glad to receive into her care a woman that had erred and had repented, so she was in Christian duty bound to cast forth and

utterly repudiate one that had shown herself far from repentance by seeking employment without first baring her inmost soul.

Violet, in a word, was put upon the street. She was told that she could have her few possessions when she called for them, but she was given neither the Rivington Street recommendation nor a new one.

She had received no leisure to see her friends of the tenement or the settlement during the days of her service, and she could not bring herself to seek them now that the black bird had again perched upon her forlorn banner. For half an hour she wandered aimlessly through the quieter streets; for another half-hour she endeavored to gather her courage. It was three o'clock in the afternoon before, desperate, she had inquired of a policeman for the whereabouts of an employment-agency, had found the grimy place, passed through the gloomy room with lines of toil-worn slatterns seated along its walls, and stated, in hesitant accents, her mission to the fat and frowzy woman in charge at a littered desk in the room beyond.

That woman—she had a steady, calculating eye—looked at her victim with a curious appraisement.

"What experience?" she asked.

"Very little," admitted Violet.

"Well are you——" The woman's voice dropped to the tone of discretion.—"Are you particular?"

"Why no," said Violet sadly, "I ain't particular, so as it's quiet."

The mistress smiled sagely.

"We can fix that all right," said she.

But she said it so knowingly that Violet found herself hurriedly adding:

"An' so long as it's *decent.*"

That it was well she had supplemented her preceding speech, she at once perceived by the change that came over the woman's face.

"Oh!" said the woman in a tone at once uninterested. "Well, have you any reference?"

"No. You see——"

"Never mind why. If we get you a job, some of the girls have plenty, an' we can lend you one of theirs. Go out an' sit down an' we'll see what happens."

Violet returned to the dark front room and took a shrinking seat in a corner among the other applicants: two lines of pasty-faced, ungainly, and not over-cleanly women.

She picked up a tattered paper, dated the preceding day, and tried to read it. She saw that the primary election had been held and that Wesley Dyker had secured one of the nominations for magistrate; but she was tired and disgusted and pursued the print no farther, listening, instead, to the babble of gossip that was going on about her.

Had she ever heard that New York was remarkable for having a model employment-agency law, she would there have learned how lightly that law is enforced and how much the employment-agencies of Manhattan resemble those of every other large city. The foul beds in which these women slept three at a time, and for the use of which the agencies frequently charged a dollar and a half a night; the exorbitant two and three dollars exacted as a fee

for every position secured; the encouragement given servants to make frequent changes and increase their fees; and the hard plight of maids dismissed from service, whose only friends, being servants themselves, had no shelter to offer—all these things were the ordinary part and parcel of their talk.

The women chattered of their old employers and bandied household secrets from loose lip to lip. Family skeletons were hauled forth for merrymaking, and testimony enough to crowd a divorce-court was given against not a few respectable citizens.

All complained of ill-housing and loneliness. Bad enough at any time, the advance of the race of flat-dwellers and the decrease of householders had intensified all the evils that domestic servants have to endure. The best servants' rooms in the ordinary houses were, it appeared, unheated; the worst were windowless closets in a kitchen or alcoves in a cellar. None of these workers had been given a room in which they could fittingly receive their friends, and, as many of them were forbidden to have callers in the kitchen, they lived what social life was possible on afternoons or evenings "off," on the streets, in the parks, or aboard those floating bar-rooms that are called excursion-boats. Violet remembered Fritzie; she remembered the heavy percentage of servants that, according to Hermann, ended in slavery —and she began to understand.

At five o'clock there entered the room a pleasant-faced, stout woman, uncommonly homely, who was obviously a prospective employer. She looked about her in embarrassment, and seemed uncertain where to go.

Violet, beside whom the stranger was standing, rose.

"Are you lookin' for the office?" she asked. "I'll show you the way."

The woman seemed to like her thoughtfulness and seemed, after a quick glance, to like her appearance even more.

"I am not particular about the office," said the newcomer; "what I want is a servant. Come outside a minute and talk to me."

Violet followed her into the street, wondering.

As they reached the pavement, the woman smiled: her smile was so pleasant that she almost ceased to be homely.

"I am a practical person," she said, "and as I also loathe and detest these agencies, I always, if possible, engage a girl so that she won't have to pay them their commissions.—Can you do general housework?"

"Yes."

"You don't look very strong."

The girl's heart throbbed. Mrs. Turner had said that dismissal was the result not of what had been done but of the thing's concealment.

"That's only because I was ill awhile ago," began Violet. "I had been in trouble——"

"But you're quite well now?" the woman interrupted.

"Quite," answered Violet.

She did not know how now to proceed; but the stranger, still smiling, soon gave her a chance.

"Any reference?"

"No, ma'am, I haven't no reference."

"How does that come?"

"I was fired from my last place." She took a breath, then a greater one, and concluded: "I was fired because the woman I worked for found out that I had been in trouble."

The stranger promptly ceased to smile.

"What sort of trouble?" she inquired.

Violet saw that she had made a fatal error, but she did not know how to end it except by proceeding.

"You know," she stammered, "there was a man——"

The stranger raised a plump, gloved hand.

"Don't tell me that," she said. "I have no right to the details. I think I understand your motive, and it's creditable, I must say. But, my dear, I am by no means a beautiful woman and I have a very susceptible husband—very. I'm afraid I must be going along."

And along she went, leaving Violet in a tossing sea of emotion. Mrs. Turner had lied, which meant the girl must lie; this later employer had said that the woman who had been enticed was generally supposed anxious to entice others, a theory that also meant that Violet must lie. She returned to the agency, convinced that her error had lain only in a lack of skill at deception.

No other customers appeared during the rest of the afternoon, and when the agency closed its doors for the night Violet, too alarmed by the stories she had heard to trust herself to one of its beds, sought the nearest policeman—she was losing her fear of policemen at last—and had him direct her to a cheap but respectable hotel. She had a little money and

she paid gladly for a room that was nearly comfortable; but she could not sleep, and she returned to the employment-office early in the morning with red eyes and swollen cheeks.

Until long after noon she sat there, waiting. She watched everyone that entered; she looked at first eagerly and at last appealingly at every possible employer; but somehow the woman in the inner room never sent for her.

At last Violet herself walked through the rear door.

The frowzy person with the calculating eyes looked at her sharply.

"You back?" she asked.

"I haven't left," said Violet.

"Why, I heard you tried to steal a customer yesterday afternoon."

"That wasn't no customer; it was a friend of mine."

"Oh! Well, what do you want now?"

"A job."

"I know that. What else?"

"I want to give you this: I have six dollars, an' I'll give you five down if you can get me a decent job in a decent house this afternoon, an' then I'll give you two dollars a week out of my first three weeks' pay."

The frowzy person screwed her lips in a downward curve that was probably intended for a smile.

"I've had that percentage game handed out to me about a thousand times before," she remarked, "an' I believe in such money when I get it. Still, I don't mind seein' that five."



Violet produced it, and saw it swiftly vanish down a black cotton stocking.

"All right. Tell you what I'll do. Here's a woman down on Washington Square wants a maid to wait on table. Can you do it?"

"I can try; but of course I've never done it before."

"I'll rent you a couple of references in the name of Bella Nimick—that'll cost you two dollars more, an' I guess I'll have to trust you for it—an' the cook down there—she deals with us—she'll give you some pointers on the job. You'll find it a good place. They're old swells, an' the name's Chamberlin."

Violet lost no time in seeking this new address. She found it to be a large brick house, with white marble steps, facing the leafy square from the north, and looking across the broad green lawn toward a church that towered into the blue skies by day and by night reached up toward Heaven with a fiery cross. The cook, to whom, through the areaway, she made her application, proved to be an ample Swedish woman, with a heart fashioned in true proportion to her body, and a round, placid face that spoke well for her mistress.

That mistress, Violet was without delay informed, was an invalid, whose ills, if mostly fanciful, were at least fancied with a force sufficient to keep her in town and in the house all summer long. Her husband—she had remarried after a divorce—passed the warm months visiting more wealthy friends along the rocky Maine coast, and her son ran in to see her between such invitations to Newport and Narragansett as he could secure. A daughter by the second

union, a girl of sixteen, remained to care for her mother, and this child and a professional nurse, whose long service made her almost a member of the family, completed the household.

Violet was presented to Mrs. Chamberlin, a frail woman with a white, delicate face, lying on a couch in a darkened library, and, her references being casually read, was promptly engaged. She was to receive eighteen dollars a month for far lighter work than had been her portion under the sway of Mrs. Turner, and, as Bella Nimick, began at once to see that a better time was before her.

Objections there of course were, but these were not of a sort that either Violet's previous experience or present necessity permitted her to observe. Brought up in wealth, Mrs. Chamberlin's ideals had not been improved by that decline of fortune consequent upon her marriage. Neither in a practical nor in an executive sense had she received any training, and, though she would have told you that household management was woman's true sphere, she actually knew as little of it as she did of the wholesale drug trade. It had never occurred to her that cooking was even distantly related to chemistry and dietetics; scrubbing, dusting, and sweeping to hygiene, or domestic administration to bookkeeping. By the same token, the two servants had to share a dark, narrow room in the basement, had no sitting-room save the kitchen and, so far as social life went, would have been, had they depended upon the Chamberlin house, twin Selkirks on a Juan Fernandez.

But Violet was happy. Her health, if it did not improve, at least did not noticeably decline. The



work, if it was hard, was at least possible of accomplishment. And within a week she had made herself so valuable to both her mistress and her mistress's nurse that these potentates found continuous need of her.

Then the first blow fell.

She had just put away the last of the dishes from an early dinner and was passing the barred front window of the basement when, from the sunset across the square, a shadow descended to the floor within. She looked up, startled. In the areaway a dapper, dark, flashily dressed young man was standing, and the young man was Angel.

Violet darted away from the window, but Angel, reaching through the bars, calmly raised the sash, which, even in the warmest weather, was drawn against the noise and dust of the street. His dark face was flushed, and though his wet, red lips were smiling, they smiled evilly.

"No treecks," he commanded. "You come to me. I wanta talk."

Violet did not answer. She huddled into the farthest corner.

"Stan' out!" continued Angel, his lips still curved. "You theenka me so dumb? I am sharpa 'nough for see you. You come here, or I go ope stairs an' reenga da bell."

Slowly, like the bird advancing to the swaying serpent, she obeyed him.

"Now," he said, when they were face to face, "you alone?"

She thanked Heaven that they were. The cook was in the kitchen.

"Poot on you' hat an' come alonga with me."

"I won't!" said Violet.

"You do eet!"

"I can't. The missus won't let me. It ain't my night off."

"Eef you don't, I go ope stairs an' tell all abouta you."

"I don't care. I won't go!"

"Queeck!"

"No."

"Then da woman she fire you, an' I get you when you come out alone."

Violet knew that he meant it.

"Where do you want to take me?" she asked. "I won't let you never take me back to Rose's."

"No fear," laughed Angel, shaking his oily curls. "Meess Rosie she would not stan' to have you near."

"Then what do you want?"

"I want you come to District Attorney's, da place you go witha that fine gentleman Dyker. You won'ta be hurt. You can peeck out any cop on da way to go along, an' you weell knowa da place."

"Does he want me—that lawyer I talked to there before?"

"I been to see him an' tell him we come."

"Then what am I to do when I get there?"

"Taka back all you say for thata Dyke'. Da's all: no more—only so mooch. I won't bother you no more; thata lawyer won't bother you no more; Dyker won't bother you no more. You do that, or losa da job. Wheech?"

Violet put her hand before her eyes. She knew as well as a wiser woman what had happened. An-

gel had traced her to Katie's, to the hospital, to the settlement, to the employment-agency—he was doubtless familiar with such places—to this house. Rose's latest captive had been turned out on the streets before the raid and lost to sight. The entire white-slavery charge now rested on Violet's testimony, and Angel's purpose was to have her withdraw the affidavit she had made. In her present condition, she could not, she thought, be of any further use to him; that purpose served, he would be only too glad to let her again hide herself, and, hidden here, with Dyker elected and engaged by newer cares, she might escape both friends and foes. Terror drove out all desire for revenge upon Rose Légère; it drove out even the power to keep her promise to Dyker. All that she wanted was her job.

"All right," she said. "Wait till I go upstairs and get permission."

"No treecks," cautioned Angel. "Eef you try treecks, I go upstair' myself."

She promised, and left him, presenting to Mrs. Chamberlin in the library, a moment later, a face that bore out her story of the illness of a friend.

"Well," said the invalid, "if you go out I shall be certain to need you; but I suppose there is no help for it. Don't be gone more than an hour."

Violet joined Angel in the area, and went with him, but, though she was disposed toward silence, she was surprised to find the Italian in a pleasant, even a genial, mood.

In his moment of success, he was well-nigh magnanimous. He bore not a trace of malice, seeming to regard the whole matter as a game in which all

the moves on both sides had been in accord with the rules. He chattered a variety of gossip about everything and every person save those who were most intimately concerned in his present action, and only as they neared the office, where a light showed that the young assistant had remained in accordance with the word that Angel had previously brought him, did he touch upon the matter in hand.

"No treecks, now," he cautioned. "All you gotta do ees tella heem you were Rosie's frien' an' she hit you, so you gotta drunk an' wanted to maka trouble."

"Won't he be cross?" asked Violet, her agitation returning anew.

"Naw," Angel reassured her. "He's used to sucha t'ings. Don' forgot, an' I give you five doll'."

They entered the office that Violet just recalled as having visited with Dyker in her fever-dream. At a desk, covered with neatly arranged piles of papers sat the young assistant, who, having then seen her red with illness, and now seeing her still white from its recovery, might well suppose that their first meeting was the result of drunken malice.

"Here she ees," smiled Angel, "like I promise. She ees a gooda girl now, an' sorry she tell you da deeferent story an' maka trouble."

Angelelli had told Violet the truth: the young man was indeed used to such things—so used to them that he knew protest was fruitless and that his inquiry must be formal.

"You want to withdraw your deposition?" he asked. He was a kindly young man with a thin face.



"Do I what?" asked Violet.

"He means——" began Angel.

"I mean," interrupted the lawyer, "do you want to take back the story you told me about Rose Légère? This case is on the calendar for to-morrow, so if you mean to take back what you said, you had better do it now."

"It won't get me into no trouble?"

The young man raised his eyebrows.

"What would be the use?" he inquired. "No, it won't get you into any trouble."

"Then I'll take it back," said Violet.

"You'll have to be sworn, you know."

"She don' minda that," said Angel. "Do you, Violet?"

The girl shook her head, and a clerk was called and administered an oath so rapidly that Violet could understand no word of it.

"You're doing this of your own free will—just because you want to?" resumed the lawyer, donning his professional air, and seeming to become infected with the clerk's rapidity of utterance. "You are not swayed by any promise of pecuniary reward—that is because you're paid for it? And there has been no force or threat used to compel you to do it—I mean you haven't been told you'd be hurt if you backed down?"

Violet bowed in token of a desire to answer these questions in whatever way was necessary to her bargain, and the new deposition proceeded in the same manner and along the lines that Angel had laid down. The clerk hurried because he wanted to get home; the lawyer hurried because he thoroughly dis-

believed every word that was written; and, severe as Violet had feared that the ordeal would be, it was over far sooner than she had expected.

Angel, still loyal to his word, saw her safely home.

"Now," he said, as he left her at the areaway, "nobody weell ever any more bother you. Good-night."

He raised his hat and went away, but, as he turned, he pressed into her cold hand a crisp, new bill.

Violet's fingers closed about it silently. She had earned it.



XIX

"FIAT JUSTITIA RUAT CAELUM"

THE trial of Rose Légère was precisely the farce that Violet had expected and that Angel had planned. In ninety of such cases out of every hundred, the chief witnesses for the state are suppressed by fear or force, and the prosecution collapses. Thus, in the present instance, had not the newspapers made first-page announcements of the Légère woman's arrest and so attracted to the case the momentary attention of an effervescing moral public, the District Attorney's office would, in fact, have contented itself with submitting the indictment and asking for a verdict of not guilty.

With Violet in the hospital during the session of the Grand Jury, Wesley, now a man of power, had been able to refresh Larry Riley's memory to such a point that, in the hands of the prosecutor, the policeman's evidence was sufficient to insure the finding of a true bill; but when the case was called for trial the situation was vastly changed. The girl that had followed Violet into the net had been cast back into the sea of the city and utterly swallowed up. Violet herself had recanted. The elder inmates of the Légère establishment regarded the law as their natural enemy and, had they been disposed to assist it, could in no wise have been regarded as credible witnesses. The action had, therefore, to rest en-

tirely upon Riley's testimony, and for Riley's testimony there was virtually no corroboration procurable.

"You're a good thing—I don't think," remarked the weary-faced young Assistant District Attorney as, on the morning of the trial, he met Dyker in the corridor of the court. "We shoved this case about five years ahead on the calendar to please you, and the night before it's called your witness comes to my office and eats her deposition."

Wesley had already heard that piece of news. When, in order to keep an eye upon Violet, he had, some time previously, sought her at Katie's tenement, and had received a series of uncredited vows to the effect that the Irish girl had no idea of the whereabouts of her late charge, he had begun to look for a recantation. It was the sort of game that he had himself frequently played, and he blamed his own lack of foresight in not better providing against it. Then other interests had arisen. The campaign came on apace; there were newer enemies than Rose to be dealt with, and, when the wires leading from the District Attorney's office had informed him that the expected had occurred, he received the word with calm philosophy.

"Well," he carelessly laughed in reply to the young assistant's sally, "that's always the way: we elect you people into your jobs and then you think that we ought to get up your cases for you and hold your witnesses."

He went on his way, unconcerned. Scarcely less concerned, the young assistant, knowing that his cause was lost, proceeded into court with a solemn



air calculated to convince an outraged public morality of his high intent; challenged juror after juror with a frowning brow; outlined his case with biting logic; examined Riley, as the officer on the beat, together with the other policemen that had made the arrest, in an heroic style eminently pleasing to the reporters; finally worked himself into a profuse perspiration of Ciceronian invective against the prisoner and, mopping his weary face, sat down.

Equally without concern, and knowing his cause was won, counsel for the defense, a suave little personage, played his rôle as the cues came to him: retained his suavity through an opening statement flatly denying that of his learned young friend; pretended to drop a little of the suavity through a series of cutting cross-examinations that left nothing of the policeman's vague testimony; and gave an excellent imitation of throwing away all the rest of the suavity when, in an impassioned speech, quite up to that of his learned young friend, he declared that he would call no witness (which he did not dare to do), because the Commonwealth had wholly failed to make out its case (which was quite true), and because a respectable lady, the daughter of a mother, had been outraged by ruffianly officers, her humble home ruthlessly wrecked, and her livelihood endangered (which was absolutely false).

So, at last, without any pretense at concern whatever, the bottle-nosed personage on the bench ceased drawing pigs on his blotter, and, sharing the common knowledge of the fate of the case, gravely instructed the unwashed jury that if they thought two and two were four they should so find, whereas if,

on the other hand, they believed four to be the sum of one and one plus one and one they were to perform their sworn duty and so report. And the unwashed jury, without leaving the court-room, declared Rose Légère an innocent woman.

The innocent woman, still the pleasantly stout lady of the brewery advertisement, shook gratefully the soft paw of her forensic defender.

"Thank God that's over," said she, with quite as much feeling and quite as much reason as many others of us return praise to Heaven for benefits that originate a good deal nearer earth.

The suave defender smiled.

"Yes," he said, "thank God—and pay *me*."

"You'll get a check in the morning," Rose replied, "an' I haven't a grudge against nobody, though I do think that other lawyer might 'a' got less gay with his tongue."

"He was only doing his duty, Mrs. Légère. It's the law, you know."

"What if it is? I didn't make it. What I don't like to see is the way you people'll go back on your friends because somethin' or other's the law."

She gathered her silk skirts free of contamination by the low crowd in the court-room, and made her way to a waiting taxicab outside.

"I think," she said, as that vehicle began to pump through the streets, "I'll pay a little call on Mr. Wesley Dyker."

She found him, somewhat surprised beneath his drooping lids, at his office, and he immediately agreed to see her alone.

"Now then," she said pleasantly, seating herself



unasked before his desk and leaning easily back in her chair, "what I want to know is: Am I goin' to be let alone?"

Dyker stroked his crisp mustache. He wanted to gain time.

"You were acquitted, then?" he asked.

"Looks like it, don't it? See here, Wes, I know where all my trouble come from, an' I can pretty well guess how it come; but I'm willin' to ferget it if you are. Are you?"

Dyker's slow eyes were raised to hers, then lowered.

"Yes," he said.

"All right. Now you'll need me an' I'll lend a hand, but I've got to know first off if I'm not goin' to be interfered with."

"You had better see O'Malley about that."

"No, I hadn't. You went to see him first; go to him again."

"I——" Dyker twirled a pencil between his white fingers. "I shan't be sorry if I do?"

"You will not."

"I may count on that, may I?"

Rose squared herself in her chair.

"Got a talkin'-machine around here?" she inquired.

"Why, no."

"Because I'd like to have some soft music while I tell you the story of my life—see?"

"I don't believe you have to tell that."

"Yes, I do. I want you to know just what I am; then you'll see whether you can depend on me. I was brought up decent—that's the truth. I had my

church an' Sunday-school like you had, an' perhaps more. The other sort of school I had to quit early, because my old man wasn't paid enough to keep me on, an' I had to go to work myself. I was under the age; but I swore I wasn't, so that was all right, an' after I'd tramped over the whole town, I got a job filin' letters an' addressin' circulars in a young broker's office. I was mighty little, but I was mighty good lookin'. I thought he took me for what I could do, but I found out he took me for my looks."

She spoke quite without emotion, and Dyker, in spite of himself, was interested.

"It cost that broker a lot to live," she continued; "so much that he couldn't afford to get married. When he'd got through with me, after a few years, an' the baby was dead in the hospital, my people were so damned respectable that I didn't dare go home to them. Wall Street had been plungin'; nobody'd buy stocks; I couldn't get a job there. Times was hard and I couldn't find a place anywhere else. It was up to me to starve to death, go into a home an' be marked for life, or get real money the best way I could."

She paused, and Wesley found himself interjecting an urging "Well?"

"Well, I got the money. My broker put me up in a flat. He stole the cash to do it, an' when the fly-cops got next, he blew out his brains. I was still high and dry, so I got a couple of girls to help me. Then I met Mike O'Malley's brother—the one that's dead now—an' he squared things for me so's I could open up the place you knew. He owned my joint



an' was right and regular. He saw to it I wasn't bothered, an' we paid for protection an' furnished an address when his brother needed one for voters. I never had no trouble 'till O'Malley's brother was dead an' you queered me with Mike himself."

"And is that all?"

"Yes, that's all. It's about what you'd learn from any other woman in my line of work. But I'll tell you one thing: I got my girls however I could—a lot of 'em because your friends brought 'em, an' everyone that was brought that way I paid for, fair an' square an' good an' heavy; I had to keep the women down because expenses was so high; but no man was ever cheated in my place, an' no man was ever robbed with my knowledge. I may have bad habits of my own, even for my sort of a life; but I always treat my customers on the level, an' I always see that my girls treat 'em on the level, too."

"What about the hangers-on?" asked Wesley.

"You mean about Angel? Well, I played double because I didn't know who was goin' to be on top, an' in this business you've always got to be on the winnin' side. Now you *are* on top an' there can't be no question. I'm in this line because I've got to live; I couldn't do nothin' else; an' I'm goin' to keep on in it as long as I live. You see now that I've always been on the level in one way; you see that I haven't no reason now not to be on the level in the other way.—Will you go an' fix it with O'Malley?"

He did fix it. He fixed it that afternoon, and he

fixed it so firmly that, within ten days, Rose, with her former minions gathered from the corners where she had hidden them, was living and prospering in the house that Riley had raided.

Impartial Justice had been satisfied.



XX

THE SANCTITY OF THE HOME

DESTINY, busy as she had been with the affairs of Rose Légère, had not neglected the usually serene residence of Mrs. Ferdinand Wapping Chamberlin. For ten hours the invalid herself had been fretful. This had reacted upon the gentle nature of Mistress Madelaine, who had in turn made the nurse to suffer, and the nurse, in her own phrase, had "taken it out on" Lena Johnson, the Swedish cook.

"An' it's all ban because that son of another husband ban comin' home," said the naturally good-tempered Lena, in an effort to pass along the general discontent to Violet.

"What of that?" Violet asked. "Is he home so seldom that we've got to get the whole house ready for him?"

It appeared from Lena's answer that the young man was home far more frequently than his mother's finances could well afford. When he honored the Chamberlin roof with his presence, he generally managed to secure all the money within reach and to devote that money to sociological researches that kept him out until the lesser hours of the morning. These stubborn pursuits were, it seemed, highly disapproved of by both his mother and his sister, yet both his

mother and his sister hated his father, the divorced husband of the remarried Mrs. Chamberlin; and as the son and brother constantly threatened that any interference would result in a transfer of his affectionate borrowings to the bank-account of his sire, both women were, during his intermittent residence with them, torn between their improbation of his pursuits and their fear that he would desert the maternal house for the paternal club.

"What's his name?" asked Violet, as she lent a hand at the preparation of dinner.

"Philip," answered Lena, "an' it ought to be Hungry Haakon."

And yet, when the prodigal reached the house that evening and, admitting himself with his own latch-key, hurried into the library where his mother and sister, the former on the couch and the latter seated beside it, were awaiting the announcement that dinner was served, he would not have appeared, to any stranger that could see him, a much worse young man than most young men.

"Hello!" he cried, kissing both women lightly on the cheek. "Sister more of a lure for susceptible hearts than ever!"

"Much chance *I* have!" murmured black-eyed Madelaine, brushing aside a careful blonde curl disordered by his onslaught.

"And the *Mutter* getting better every day," pursued the unabashed youth.

"Your mother," said Mrs. Chamberlin, her heavy brows rising almost to the level of her lace cap, "will never be herself again, and you well know it."

"Poof! A lean horse for a long race, *Mutter.*"



Mrs. Chamberlin waved a thin hand in dismissal of all discussion.

"If you mean to dress for dinner," she said, "you had better begin, Philip."

"No use. I have an engagement for to-night in circles where evening clothes are rarely considered quite proper, and I washed up at the club."

"Oh, then you stopped there before coming to your home?"

"It was on my way."

"And you of course saw that terrible man?"

This being the term in which Mrs. Chamberlin habitually referred to the husband that had been so wicked as to permit her, after her elopement with Chamberlin, to institute and win a suit for divorce, her son merely nodded.

"But what's the use of bothering about that?" he demanded. "It was on the way, I tell you. Cheer up: one may smile and smile and be a woman still."

But his hearers, by way of response to this advice, sighed audibly.

"I don't think it was very considerate of you, Philip," vouchsafed the younger. "You must remember that when you got that last check from mother——"

"Madelaine!" cautioned Mrs. Chamberlin.

"I don't care, dear. Philip, you must remember that when you got that last check from mother, it was on your distinct promise that you would not see your father again for a year."

"And don't you remember," retorted Philip, "that I afterwards, upon reflection, distinctly with-

drew that distinct promise as utterly and in essence unfilial? A woman can always remember more things than a man has forgotten, and forget whatever she doesn't want to remember. If it had been an honest woman instead of an honest man that Diogenes was looking for, he'd have had to throw away his lantern and hire a portable lighthouse."

But he kissed the girl as he said this, and pressed his mother's hand.

"The trouble with you two," he declared, "is that you don't get about enough. Seclusion makes you serious."

"I wish," said Mrs. Chamberlin, "that you had brought me back the news that you had grown more like us."

"More serious? Still harping on your son, dear! No, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I've about given up all hope of marrying money, and marrying anything else is an impossibility. I must be getting on in years. You know how it is: as we grow older we become more particular and less desirable—when we're old enough to have learned properly to play the game of love, we're too old to play it."

"You're a mere boy," observed Madelaine, with a toss of her blonde curls.

"And you talk like one," said Mrs. Chamberlin, smiling in spite of herself.

"I'd never think of accepting anybody so young as you are," the girl added.

Philip pulled her pink ear.

"That's right, Queen Mab," he agreed; "wait till a man is large and round and settled. And when



you do marry, marry for keeps: a little marriage is a dangerous thing, eh, *Mutter?*"

"Philip!"

What more she would have said to this criticism of her own estate, Mrs. Chamberlin's son was not just then to hear, for a Japanese gong interrupted her with the melodious announcement of dinner, and the son snatched his protesting mother in his arms and, with Madelaine following, bore her into the brightly lighted dining-room.

He looked at the shining silver and gleaming linen and glass and china, and he saw the pale liquid that filled one of the glasses at his own accustomed place.

"Good!" he cried. "I hope Lena's hand has not forgotten its cunning. Stolen waters are sweet, but the best cocktail is a dry one."

And then, with his living burden still in his strong arms, he looked across the table and into the eyes of the new servant.

The new servant, from the shadow, returned that gaze. She saw before her, in the person of her employer's son, Philip Beekman, the black-haired, gray-eyed young waster that had once promised her help in the house of Rose Légère. On her part, Violet could have no doubt, and it was only with the utmost exercise of self-control that she continued her duties. But for Philip certainty was not immediately obtainable. He saw many girls in the surroundings in which he had first seen Violet, and her he would probably long since have forgotten had it not been for the appeal that she had made to his surface emotions. Nevertheless, the walls of his own home did not, in this case, form a setting that made for easy

identification, and, besides, though this woman had recovered some degree of her health, the best of her looks would never return. Beauty is the quality most remembered by such men as Philip Beekman, and beauty lost is the best disguise against them. Philip, therefore, quietly deposited his mother in her chair, and continued his easy raillery until the soup had been served and the little family had been left, for a time, alone.

"New maid?" he then casually inquired.

"Yes," said Mrs. Chamberlin, "and actually a fairly competent one."

"What's her name?"

"Bella."

"Any more?"

"Really, I don't recall her family name, Philip. What possible difference can it make?"

"I suppose," said Madelaine, "that he thinks her pallor interesting."

"Nonsense, Madelaine!"

"Her last name is Nimick, Philip."

"Oh!" said Philip, inwardly reflecting that, in the nature of things, a name could not much signify. "I was merely attracted by the fact that she didn't precisely resemble a servant. Have you never noticed how all men look as if they belonged to the class below their own, and all women to the class above? It seems as if a man could never rise above his environment, and as if a woman could never descend to hers."

He did not again refer to the subject, but the subject was, during all the meal, keenly conscious that his gray eyes were covertly watching her. She moved



about the room with increasing difficulty. Her hand shook as she brought the salad-bowl, and she spilled some of his coffee on the cloth.

As soon as Lena had left the kitchen and gone upstairs, Beekman came into the pantry. His manner, neither that which she had once known nor that which she had more lately observed, was quick and threatening; his frank face was flushed with anger.

"Your name is Violet," he said in a voice that, though low, shook under the restraint that he put upon it.

She was standing beneath a gas-jet, a little column of dishes in her hand. The cruel light showed the havoc that had been wrought upon her, but it also showed the marks that no years or change could alter.

"Yes," she said, her own voice scarce a whisper.

"Did you——" he bit his lip. "Did you come here to scare me?" he demanded.

She put down the dishes.

"What do you mean, Mr. Beekman?"

"Because I haven't any money, you know."

"Mr. Beekman!"

She put her hand before her face, and he saw that he had been wrong.

"I beg your pardon," he sulkily said. "In the circumstances, it wasn't an unnatural supposition, though my mother thoroughly understands my manner of life; but I see now that I shouldn't have said it."

He paused, and then, because he hated to be in the wrong, he hunted about for another excuse for

attack, and, finding one, became more angry than before.

"Only how dared you," he asked, "how did you *dare* to come into this house?"

Violet bowed her russet head.

"I didn't know it was yours," she said.

"You didn't know?"

"How could I? Lena didn't happen to say nothin' about you before to-day, an' your mother has a different name."

"Don't talk of my mother!" he commanded.

Had Violet known all the truth of her mistress, it would probably have flashed over even the servant's dull brain that the difference between a woman beaten into slavery and a woman that married the man who, during her first marriage, had been her lover, was a difference not of kind, but of degree, and of a degree decidedly in the ethical favor of the former. However, she held her tongue.

It was the best shield she could have chosen. Through silence few fits of anger are strong enough to reach, and the quick temper of Beekman began slowly to spend itself.

"I don't see how you could come into any decent house," he grumbled, "no matter whether you knew whose it was or not."

Still Violet did not answer.

"I suppose you didn't think about that, though," Philip pursued.

Violet was as yet too stunned at all adequately to feel. With a shaking finger she drew invisible arabesques upon the shelf beside her.



"How did you get away from Rose's, anyhow?" he asked.

Slowly she raised her head. Slowly she fixed him with her tired blue eyes. And slowly, still drawing arabesques now unregarded, she answered:

"Does that make much difference, Mr. Beekman?"

"Wasn't I interested?" he blustered.

"Because, you see," she concluded, "however it was, it wasn't by none of the help you promised."

The thrust just pierced his armor of convention.

"Oh, well," he said, "what could I do? I wanted to help—you know that—but what could I do?"

"Nothin'!" Her eyes clouded as if they looked at something which, though clear to sight, passed all explaining. "Nothin', I suppose."

The words lent him courage.

"And I can't do anything now," he went on, his anger cold, but his determination unchanged. "I'm sorry for you—on my word of honor, I am sorry for you with my whole heart, Violet—but you can't stay here—you must see that you can't stay in this house another night."

Her eyes were still on his.

"I know you think that," she replied, as if puzzled and seeking a solution. "An' I know what you think goes.—But, myself, I can't see why not."

"But, Violet, just consider!" he cried, his hands outstretched.

"You wanted me to get away an' get a decent job," she dully answered.

"Not here."

"What's the difference? What's the difference whether it's here or somewheres else? I can't see."

"But here all the time I should *know*."

"Don't you know, wherever you are, about lots of others that don't get away? An' does that hurt you? Wouldn't you know about me wherever you are, about me wherever I went? An' would that hurt me?"

"You don't understand!"

He seemed to charge her with her admitted incomprehension as if it were a crime.

"No, I don't," she repeated.

"Can't you see that if you were somewhere else, it would be different?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't."

"Not if you were where nobody knew about you?"

"No, I don't see that, Mr. Beekman. I haven't got any disease to give people."

"I wasn't thinking that."

"Well, you wouldn't tell on me to the people I went to if I went somewheres else?"

"Certainly I wouldn't."

"An' you don't think I'd steal, do you?"

"Of course not."

"Nor—nor get anybody who was kind to me into the sort of a hell I worked so hard to get myself out of?"

"How could I think it? What are you driving at, Violet?"

"This: that if all them things is the way you say, I'm fit for any job I'm able to do—an' I'm able to do this one."



"Not in this house."

"What's the difference where?" Her voice was still low, and her words still came slowly; but she was, however imperfectly and painfully, beginning to think—which is a very dangerous thing in any exploited individual. "What's the difference where?" she asked. "What you know don't make me no worse, an' what I know don't make me no better. The truth's the truth. What's happened's happened. I used to be a girl in Rose's house, no matter if I was now workin' in your house an' you do know what I used to be. Wherever I am, I'm what I am; your knowin' it don't help or hinder; an' if I'm fit for next door I'm fit for here."

Philip Beekman passed his long fingers through his black hair. It was the gesture she had seen him employ on that remembered night at Rose's, but now it had a new significance. The young man was as much the creature of his surroundings as Violet was the creation of hers. He could no more appreciate her point of view than she could comprehend his. It was as if they spoke different tongues. Beekman was powerless to argue further, and when a man reaches that condition, he takes a firm stand upon authority.

"All right," he said; "we won't waste words. The hard fact is that you've got to go. I'm sorry, but you've got to go and go now."

She bowed her head; she had finished.

He wished she would answer; he wished she would fly into a rage; but as she remained dumb, he continued:

"I suppose your hat and jacket are in the kitchen.

You can drop me a card telling me where to send your trunk. I'll explain this to your—to my mother somehow. I'll do whatever I can for you—outside."

A slow shake of her russet head was her reply.

"I'll give you a recommendation."

"I won't need none, Mr. Beekman."

"I—I think I've got fifty dollars somewhere in my clothes."

"I was paid my wages only this mornin'."

He looked at her in gray-eyed amazement.

"But I say," he began, "you aren't going to—you don't mean you won't——"

She did not answer. She moved slowly and quietly away. She went to the kitchen, got her shabby beaver hat and her long coat.

Philip, in the pantry, remained as she had left him, erect, eyes and mouth wide.

A moment later he heard the area door open and close.



XXI

AN ANCIENT PROBLEM

"AN' twent' from Rosie Légère's," said Angel, "maka two hundre'."

Hermann Hoffmann, alone behind the bar in Schleger's saloon, and half asleep as he bent over a thumbed and stained copy of the last evening's paper, scarcely raised his head. It was half-past one o'clock in the morning. Except for Angelelli and the man to whom he was talking at a table by the door, the place was empty of customers, and so unconcerned were these two late-comers that, had he wished it, every word of their conversation could have been taken down by the bar-keeper.

But the bar-keeper did not wish it. He knew both the men, and had heard something of the character of each, as every good bar-keeper comes to know and to hear about most of the regular patrons of the establishment that employs him. With Angel he had even had a nodding acquaintance in the days of the brewery-wagon, and since he had donned the white jacket he had seen often the narrow-chested, stoop-shouldered, slouching Austrian now in conference with the dapper Rafael. He had been told that this Austrian, with his bristling brown hair, pale face, and thin mouth, pulled downward at one corner by an ugly scar, made his regular living by appropriating the wages of a girl that he nightly

drove forth to scour the dark streets, earning what money she could from what looks were left her and stealing what she could not earn. And Hermann knew that, now an election was near, both of these proud possessors of the suffrage were doing their exacted duty for the powers that permitted them to thrive, and were, like the army of others in their own profession, through all New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, through the tenderloin of every American city, providing for the voting of repeaters, of dead men, of men that never were, in the interests of whichever of the two great political parties happens to be in control of the city where such votes are needed.

"Mirka," said Angel, laying down his gold-rimmed fountain-pen and looking up from the back of the envelope on which he had been making his calculations, "we weell need a hundre' more."

Mirka, the Austrian, tried to smile, but that ugly scar at the corner of his mouth caught the smile in the making and pulled it down into a sinister sneer.

"I can smoke out fifty if you can," he said.

"Da sama kind?"

"Yes."

Hermann, behind the bar, frankly yawned. He remembered, with a slow smile, how, when he had first come across such practices, years ago, he had gone to the ward-leader of that party in whose interests the work was being done. He remembered how this potentate had first assured him that he had "heard wrong," and finally met his persistence with a warning that he had better keep his mouth shut.



He remembered how, at the rival headquarters, he had been told that there was always a mass of such evidence, none of which could be effectively used before election, and how, when he had ventured to suggest that an election-offense was punishable after election-day, he had been ridiculed. And lastly, he knew that his own Socialist friends had already all the information that he had now obtained, but could do no more at the polls than lodge protests that would be overruled by the election-judges and subsequently pigeon-holed by the courts.

"All right," Angel was saying, as he pocketed his pen and tore the envelope into small bits, which he tossed deftly across the room into the gutter beneath the bar. "I feexa heem. I geta da rest."

The two men rose and stepped to the bar for a nightcap of whiskey.

Already the Austrian had drunk more than was good for his temper, but Hermann, whose eye was usually exact in discerning such matters, was sleepy to-night, and did not notice this. Angel poured a bountiful portion from the cool metal-stoppered bottle that Hoffmann shoved clanking toward him. Mirka decanted even more, and then momentarily released his hold of the bottle to speak to his companion. Hermann, thinking both men satisfied, reached for the liquor.

"Keep your dirty fingers off of that!" cried Mirka, with no trace of his nationality in his speech. "Can't you wait till I pour a real man's drink?"

Hermann flushed.

"It's a bath, den, you're goin' to dake?" he asked.

"I will if I like, you damned fool!" rejoined Mirka, his eyes warming.

Hermann's blue glance surveyed the uncouth, slouching figure.

"All righd," he said; "you need von."

The Austrian glowered. Then, tilting back his bristling head, he tossed the liquor down his long throat.

"Give me another, you Dutchie," he ordered, pushing his glass across the bar.

Angel began a quieting word, but Mirka broke in, still addressing Hermann.

"Get a move on, or I'll break yer face, Dutchie!" he insisted.

Hermann's jaw was suddenly set in a rigid line. He remained motionless.

"Come on, now!" said Mirka.

"Don' maka these treecks," protested Angelelli, dividing his plea between his hearers, and placing his hand upon the Austrian's shoulder.

"You shut up!" retorted Mirka, shaking himself free. "And you, you Dutch fool, give me a drink—quick!"

Hermann did not obey. He saw at last the fellow's condition.

"You've had enough," he said.

"Mind yer own business," snapped the Austrian.

"Dot's what I'm doing," answered Hermann, calmly reaching for the empty glasses. "You're drunk."

He had hardly spoken before Mirka, his habitual lassitude dropping from him like a discarded cloak, made a quick leap that brought him half across the



bar. The glasses crashed, the bottle was overturned, and in the Austrian's waving, clenched right hand there flashed a knife.

It was a moment of action, but a moment only. From one side of the bar, Angel had gripped Mirka by the waist and was pulling him backward; on the other, the powerful German had caught the threatening fist and now, with a quick twist, sent the knife plunging into the tub below the beer-spigots.

Spluttering obscenities, the Austrian was dragged to the position from which he had made his attack.

"You keepa quiet!" commanded Angel of the one combatant, and to the other: "You getta more fresh with your mouth an' I getta you fired."

Hermann had recovered the knife and was now calmly drying it upon a bar-towel. Such incidents were not unusual in his occupation and, now that this one was closed, he could afford to smile his answer to Rafael.

Mirka, on the other hand, though still tightly embraced by Angel, was trembling with rage.

"I'll get you for this, Dutchie!" he declared.

"So?" said Hermann. He still smiled, but he was tired of being called Dutchie, and his tongue ran just a hair's breadth ahead of his caution. "Try it," he concluded; "try it, you dirty Austrian loafer, und I'll somevheres go vhere dose names you've been makin' oud vill get you vhat you deserve."

"Whata you say?" Angel kept his hold upon his friend, but the reference to their recent occupation brought a glint of anger into his own eyes.

By way of beginning his reply, Hermann smilingly,

returned the knife to its owner, who seized it with a growl of malice.

"Neffer mind vhat I say den," he answered. "Vhat I say now is 'Goot-nighd.' You two get oud."

He raised his thick arm to point to the door, but in the manner of its raising there was another significance. For a moment Angel and Mirka met hotly his steady gaze. Then the bar-keeper raised carelessly his other hand: it held a stout bung-starter.

The two men, with a common impulse, turned and silently left the place.

Hermann was not afraid of them. He knew that his threat of betrayal had been idle, for the excellent reason that there was no quarter in which betrayal would be effective, and he told himself that, as soon as their anger and their drunkenness had in some measure subsided, the plotters would recognize this. So he whistled complacently as he polished the bright surface of the bar and did not hesitate, when he began at last to wash and put away the glasses, to turn his back to the swinging door of the saloon. The campaign was not one that was considered important and, personally, he cared but little about it or what enmities it might awaken.

The campaigners cared, however, a great deal. There was in no sane mind any question of the result, but so mighty is custom that there were few sane minds that did not publicly pretend to be in doubt upon the issue.

For many days previously, any outsider, reading the newspapers or attending the mass-meetings in Cooper Union and Carnegie Hall, would have sup-



posed that a prodigious battle was waging and that the result would be, until the last shot, in doubt. There were terrible scareheads, brutal cartoons, and extra editions. As the real problem was whether one organization of needy men should remain in control, or whether another should replace it, there were few matters of policy to be discussed; and so the speechmaking and the printing resolved themselves into personal investigations, and attacks upon character. Private detectives were hired, records searched, neighbors questioned, old enemies sought out, and family feuds revived. Desks were broken open, letters bought, anonymous communications mailed, boyhood indiscretions unearthed, and women and men hired to wheedle, to commit perjury, to entrap. Whatever was discovered, forged, stolen, manufactured—whatever truth or falsehood could be seized by whatever means—was blazoned in the papers, shrieked by the newsboys, bawled from the cart-tails at the corners under the campaign banners, in the light of the torches and before the cheering crowds. It would all be over in a very short while; in a very short while there would pass one another, with pleasant smiles, in court, at church, and along Broadway, the distinguished gentlemen that were now, before big audiences, calling one another adulterers and thieves; but it is customary for distinguished gentlemen so to call one another during a manly campaign in this successful democracy of ours, and it seems to be an engrossing occupation while the chance endures.

Though he often trembled, Wesley Dyker, perhaps because his records of any sort were as yet but

brief, escaped with a fairly clean skin this Yahoo discharge, but the downpour continued all about him with tremendous vigor and at tremendous cost. The Republican leaders, fully expecting defeat, assessed their supporters just as heavily as if they were certain to triumph, spent much time and more money and no end of breath. The Reformers, under varying factional names, bewildered, sometimes advisedly, the independent voter by here joining one leading party, there endorsing another, and in a third place clamoring for a ballot so split and so subdivided that the average man could in no wise comprehend it when marked. The Socialists, to be sure, went along calmly enough, confessing their numerical weakness and securely seeing in the small increase of the present day the promise of the large majority of the distant morrow. But all the while the Democratic organization thundered an inch forward in the light and ran a mile forward in the darkness by precisely the same powers as were invoked, with so much smaller results, by the Republicans and the Reformers.

Not that there was any reason to doubt the organization's victory. There was none. But every organization always insists that, no matter how easy the skirmish, its leaders must so manage that it comes out of the fray to all appearances stronger than it came out of the fray preceding. Each majority must be larger than the last, and so the lists are padded, and the repeaters imported, and the lodging-houses colonized, and the organization, like the frog in La Fontaine's fable, though with less reason, swells and swells against the hour when it shall finally burst.



The saloons were crowded; it was freely predicted that, the season being prosperous, votes would go at no lower than two dollars, and, in some quarters and some instances, as high as five dollars apiece.

There were some points, however, to which the tide of prosperity had not risen, and one of these was the high tenement of Katie Flanagan. The Irish girl returned there every night a little more discouraged than when she had left its precarious shelter in the morning, as doubtful as ever of Hermann's ability to support a wife, but more doubtful than ever of her own ability to help, should they marry, in the support of the home. At the shop, the work and the hours weighed more and more heavily upon her; they dragged at the heels of her mind when she endeavored to evade the insulting compliments of the callow youths and gray men that strolled by her counter, and they were impedimenta that made it daily more difficult to escape without offense the oily approaches of the dignified Mr. Porter.

"Sometimes," she said one evening, as she and Carrie sat over their meager supper, "I begin wonderin' again whether it's worth while runnin' away."

The striking shirtwaist-maker, who had spent a long day on picket-duty before a Waverley Place factory, looked up with round eyes calmly serious.

"That is what I am wondering all the time," she replied.

Katie made an impatient movement of her hand.

"Och, now," she generously protested, "it's all *right* for me to growl, because I've got a job. I

don't count, an' it's just me habit. But you mustn't do it, me dear."

"I am not complaining; I am just honestly wondering, that's all."

"But if the worst came, you *could* go back to work, you know."

Carrie's face was all surprise.

"And turn traitor to my friends striking in my own and all the other factories?" she asked. "Oh, no; you would be the last to do it yourself, Katie. I would rather go on the street."

"You don't mean that, darlin'."

"I do mean it. If I went on the street, I would hurt myself, but if I did the other thing I would hurt all the other girls in the union."

She spoke quietly, but with infinite conviction, and Katie knew the forces that had brought about this state of mind. The widespread strike, though it still continued, was a failure. Public sentiment had never been aroused; the employers had succeeded in securing non-union labor, whose wages they were, even now, securely reducing, and whose privileges—granted to entice them to work—they were curbing; their political powers earned them the armed assistance of the law; and the strikers' ranks, though but little thinned by desertion, were steadily decreased by poverty, by the necessity of the girls to find other sorts of work, by illness, and, now that the cold autumn had set in, by death. Carrie was underfed, scantily clothed, penniless, and Katie, remembering these things, found herself without reply.

Had she needed further example of the pressure of conditions upon her kind, she could have found



it in an incident in the shop on the day following. A bull-necked young man, with ruddy cheeks and a certainty of manner that spoke as loudly in his eyes and his scarf-pin as in his voice, sauntered up to the silk-stocking counter, where she happened then to be stationed, and began turning over the wares displayed.

"Have you been waited on?" inquired Katie.

"No," said the young man, looking at her steadily; "but I'd like *you* to wait on me. Are you busy?"

Katie said nothing, but stood there. The young man said nothing. Katie began to finger the boxes before her, but she felt that the young man was looking only at her.

"What quality would you like me to show you?" she asked.

"Well," parried the customer, "what quality do you like?"

She shot one glance at him: he was still looking at her.

"We have only the best at this counter," she answered, with a slight flush. "You'll be findin' the cheaper the sixth aisle to your right."

But the young man only laughed with unconcern, and continued to keep his gaze on her lowered Irish blue eyes.

"I can afford the best of everything," he said.

There was a pause. Katie raised her eyes and met his own without flinching. He smiled, but he was quite too satisfied with his own charms to notice that the salesgirl was not smiling.

"What time do you quit work?" he inquired.

"I never quit."

She said this as if she were closing a door, but the young man proceeded imperturbably to rattle at the knob.

"I thought," he said, "that you might like to eat a little dinner over at the 'York' with me this evening."

"Thanks," the girl answered, "but I do all me eatin' with me husband.—Will you, please, be tellin' me what sort of stockin's you want?"

The young man grinned. He seemed to enjoy what he took to be her playful repartee.

"Look here," he replied, "my wife is away back home, and I'm all alone over at that hotel."

He was leaning airily toward her, both hands on the counter. Katie, standing opposite, leaned toward him. She answered his smile, but he could not see that her smile was not of his own sort.

"Do you want to buy anything?" she demanded.

"Yes," said the customer, meeting her gaze again. "Will you sell?"

It was no unusual incident, no more unusual than the coming incident of Mirka's attack upon Hermann, but the girl had reached the end of her endurance, and what followed across that counter was not unlike what was to occur across Ludwig Schleger's bar. Katie opened her firm, pink palm and smacked the young bargain-seeker smartly across the mouth.

There was no immediate consequence. The aisle was too crowded to allow any but the nearest employees to witness the blow, and the crowd was too intent upon its own thousand errands to heed what



happened before its eyes. One or two salesgirls stood still at their work, petrified by alarm. One or two customers hesitated and chuckled. And then, as the young man with a face of crimson shouldered his way into a hurried oblivion from which he never reappeared, the rush of business sent the clerks whirling about their own tasks and sent the crowd hurrying about its own purposes.

But Katie knew that more would follow, and that what would follow would be an interview with Mr. Porter. The shop's system of surveillance missed nothing, and within a half-hour the girl was standing in the dark office where she had first been hired.

In his likeness to a Sunday-school superintendent Mr. Porter was shocked and grieved to hear that any young lady in the Lennox store would strike a purchaser. In his likeness to a surgeon he promptly declared that there ought to be no issue short of expulsion. And in his own hidden character—deep in his own abominable character—he was wondering whether he could not turn this incident to the advantage that he had so long sought.

"The viper was insultin' me," said Katie.

"Are you quite sure of that, Miss Flanagan?"

"Sure I'm sure. Do you have to wait for a snake to bite you before you know what he's up to?"

"You could have called the floor-walker."

"And been fined for me pains, Mr. Porter."

Mr. Porter tapped his desk and kept his eyes on his fingers.

"I find," he said slowly, "that most men do not make approaches without some encouragement, in either word or manner, on the part of the girl. I

also find that such occurrences as this are very rare in the experience of most of the girls in our employ."

He stopped, but Katie stood silent by the arm of the desk, her lips compressed, a frown between her arched black brows. He sent a crooked glance up at her, and then resumed:

"I scarcely ever have a case of this sort to deal with. I wonder why, if such things are done by customers, the other girls do not report them."

He stopped again, and this time Katie answered:

"I suppose they boss their own lives in their own way, Mr. Porter."

A faint spark of color shone in Mr. Porter's white cheek.

"I suppose they do," he answered, gently pulling at his side-whiskers, and peeping at his victim over the caressing hand. "In fact, between you and me, Miss Flanagan, I am told that some of them do that so well that they are practically independent of their wages in this store."

Again Katie failed to respond.

"Do you understand me, Miss Flanagan?"

Katie thought of her desperate days before she had found her present employment. She thought of Hermann and what seemed to be the sole chance of rising to a salary where marriage could be a practical possibility. She thought of Carrie's plight and of Carrie's dependence upon her.

"I do that, Mr. Porter," she answered.

He looked up squarely then, and she even managed to torture her face into an expression of roguery.

"Ah," said Mr. Porter, smiling a paternal smile.



He reached out and patted her hand, and, though her soul revolted, she managed to keep her hand passive. "Now, my dear young lady, you are at last coming to your senses. You mustn't take life so seriously."

"I'll try not to, Mr. Porter."

"That's right; that's right. I ought to discharge you, I know. It may be difficult not to discharge you. But I will do this much: I will suspend judgment for a few days.

He looked at her fixedly. Her cold lips formed another phrase of thanks.

"And in the meantime," he continued, "you let me know of some evening when you can come out to a quiet corner where we can have supper together, and where we won't be wasting the firm's time. Then we'll talk this whole thing over, and I'll see what I can do."

The eyes of neither wavered.

"Thank you, Mr. Porter," said Katie again.

With that she left him, but she went away with the knowledge that her game of hide-and-seek was almost ended. Just when it would end was beyond all guessing, but that it would end soon and that it would end in her defiance of her superiors and her prompt expulsion seemed altogether certain. She reflected that the small delay which she had gained would profit but lightly those in whose interests she had attempted to truckle and palliate, and, when, that night, she told her experience to Carrie, her words fell upon ears that read into them a portentous meaning.

The homely, brown-haired Lithuanian, whose

cheeks were less round now than they had been, and whose hair that needed no covering in the summer, was still uncovered, went to her weary picket-duty in Waverley Place the next morning—the morning, as it happened, that preceded Hermann's little brush with Mirka—with a slow step and a heavy heart. She knew the futility of the work she was performing; she saw it even in the relaxed vigilance of the policemen on the corners and in the mocking grins of the girls and toughs at the gloomy factory-door. All day as, sometimes companioned and sometimes alone, she plodded her eventless round, the irony of the task bit into her soul. Something she must do, and soon. Already she was deep in Katie's debt, and Katie was near dismissal.

The early autumn twilight dropped among the grimy buildings. The evening tide of Broadway rose and roared into Waverley Place. A cold wind lashed the dust into little whirlpools, wound the girl's cheap lawn skirt tightly about her aching knees, and ate through that thin material to the tingling skin. There was no one with her now, and she felt more than ever alone.

From the shadow of a doorway a man crossed the street and approached her.

He was a man of uncertain age, of almost any age below the early thirties. As he bowed to her, the girl saw that his hair was dark and curly; that the back of his hand, which was not the hand of a worker, was covered with a black down, and that through the pale olive of his sorely clean-shaven cheeks there shone the blue-black banners of a wiry



beard fighting for freedom. His lips were thick until they smiled, above white teeth, in greeting, and his gray glance had the character of an appraisement of whatever it looked upon. Carrie noticed, protruding from his breast-coatpocket, a purple bordered handkerchief.

"Hello," he said.

She looked at him gravely. She had never seen him before, but with his kind she had lately grown enough familiar. Wherever there are women on strike, men of his sort gather, as the vultures gather about dying animals in a jungle. Yet Carrie said nothing. She was, as she had expressed it to Katie, still wondering.

"I've been *vatch*in' you," said the man. "I've been vatchin' you all *tay*."

"Have you?" Carrie was totally incurious.

"Yes, I'd think you'd be pretty tired of sooch *fool*ishness."

"I am tired."

"You can't vin. If you go back it will be *choost* the same hell-mill it vas be*fore*."

"I suppose it would."

"Vell then"—his hands spread themselves in protest—"vhy don't you *qvit?* A pretty, strong girl like you could make *loads* of money fer herself."

Carrie was leaning against the factory wall. She did not move.

"How?" she asked.

"Vell, you hafn't got no *odd*er trade, eh?"

"No."

"Und you vouldn't vant to be a *ser*vant?"

"Why not?"

"Because that's vorse nor a *shirt*vaist-factory."

"Then I wouldn't want to be a servant."

Again the man extended his hands.

"Vell?" he said.

"But I knew one girl that went into a house," affirmed Carrie, "and I wouldn't do that for a fortune."

Her practical manner might have disconcerted most men, but this man's business had accustomed him to all forms of rejoinder. He immediately began an endeavor to persuade her by economic arguments.

But Carrie interrupted him.

"No," she said, "if I do it, it will be only because I have to, and then I'll not do it that way. Thank you, just the same. Here comes my relief: I don't have to wait till the girls come out to-day. Good-by."

He essayed to protest, but she walked quietly by him, made her brief report to the oncoming women, and started on her journey homeward. The man, whose trade imposed patience, said no more. He did not again approach her, and, though she knew that he was following her, through the growing crowd that rolled eastward, to mark her hiding-place, she did not attempt to elude him. She was very tired.

This was the evening that preceded the early morning call of Angel the Italian and Mirka the Austrian to Ludwig Schleger's saloon, and it was about eight hours later that Hermann, having seen his assailants leave, turned his back to the bar-room door and, alone in the place, set about washing the discarded glasses. Except that he was sleepy, he



was in his usual spirits and he was whistling " Die Wacht Am Rhein." He was whistling so loudly that he did not hear the door reopen.

There was a flash as of a thousand blinding lights, a roar as if a train had fallen from the elevated road overhead, and Hermann, in the smoke-filled saloon, himself fell crashing behind the bar, and lay there, huddled and still.

Mirka quietly reclosed the door and darted around the corner.

XXII

THE SERPENTS' DEN

POVERTY, which produces the slave, breeds, just as surely, the slaver. Take where you will the trail of the trafficker in women, this rule is proven. It is proven in puritan Boston and protected New Orleans, in Chicago and Washington, in Philadelphia and San Francisco, and on the heroic scale it is nowhere more plainly proven than in the heroic city of New York.

On Manhattan Island is, indeed, the Mother-Church, however unconsciously organized, of the black faith, and though, of necessity, there spontaneously arise elsewhere congregations that reach back to her, here is founded and established the Congregation of the Propaganda that reaches out to them. Its missionaries—its women, men, and methods—have stretched to Nome and the Canal Zone; they are preaching their own brand of dogma against the native versions of Buenos Ayres and Sydney, of Shanghai and Cape Town; and within its home city the hierarchy is entrenched by financial strength, political power, and legal negligence. As an industry, it has its wholesalers and retailers; or, as a church, its bishops sit in their national house of peers, while its younger orders, its proselyting priests and evangelizing deacons, perform their



especial tasks, the young appealing to the young, the poor preying upon poverty.

The entrance to these lower orders lies, as in most orders and most businesses, through a period of probation: the lad of sixteen plays the rôle of watchdog and spy for his superiors, for which he earns an occasional fifty-cent piece, or a casual kettle of beer, vastly increasing his income if he now and then diverts, as he generally does, his energies to the occupation of amateur theft. From this stage he is admitted, by his own efforts, to the possession of one girl, whom he bullies into working for him along the streets. He may occasionally deign to appear as a waiter in a café, and offer his woman to its drunken habitués; but most frequently he scorns all menial labor, for which, in fact, conditions have utterly unfitted him. Sometimes he increases his slave-holdings to a trio of women, and even farms out his victims to friends in his own or other neighborhoods or towns: more often he delivers his human wares to the proprietors of houses intended for their reception, being paid in a lump sum, or on a royalty basis; but in either case his ambition is, naturally, to rise to the position of the large property-holder or the political receiver of tribute. If he is an Italian, common consent limits his operations to the southern end of the Bowery; if he is a Jew, his field lies about the Houston and Essex Streets districts; whatever his European parentage, he seeks his fellow-countrywomen, and if he is American born he has the freedom of Broadway.

His means are multitude. Wherever there is squalor seeking ease, he is there. Wherever there

is distress crying for succor, discontent complaining for relief, weariness sighing for rest, there is this missionary, this "cadet," offering the quack salvation of his temporal church. He knows and takes subtle advantage of the Jewish sisters sent to work for the education of Jewish brothers; the Irish, the Germans, the Russians, and the Syrians ground in one or another economic mill; the restless neurotic native-daughters untrained for work and spoiled for play. He is at the door of the factory when it releases its white-faced women for a breath of night air; he is at the cheap lunch-room where the stenographers bolt unwholesome noonday food handed about by underpaid waitresses; he lurks around the corner for the servant and the shop-clerk. He remembers that these are girls too tired to do household work in their evenings, too untaught to find continued solace in books; that they must go out, that they must move about; and so he passes his own nights at the restaurants and theaters, the moving-picture shows, the dancing academies, the dance-halls. He may go into those stifling rooms where immigrants, long before they learn to make a half-complete sentence of what they call the American language, learn what they are told are American dances: the whirling "spiel" with blowing skirts, the "half-time waltz" with jerking hips. He may frequent the more sophisticated forms of these places, may even be seen in the more expensive cafés, or may journey into the provinces. But he scents poverty from afar.

Where training is as yet too strong or distress too weak to make serve the offer of partnership, the promise of marriage usually suffices. The thing is



done, and once done, blows and starvation perpetuate it with the ignorant, and threats of exposure and public shame rivet the shackles on the more knowing. The former suffer for their darkness; the latter are held the faster in proportion to their previous respectability.

One has said that this church is established; in every city it maintains its incestuous marriage to the state. It controls real votes by the thousands and provides false ones by the tens of thousands. It is a church that may be considered to exercise the old ecclesiastical right of trying its own offenders in its own courts. When the magistrates have not begun as slavers, when they own no poor, but highly rented, houses, leased for prostitution, when they do not even accept tithes from the traffic, it is still largely the traffic that elects and can defeat them. What the Black Church owes to the political powers for their protection, the political powers owe to the church for its ballots.

It was this condition that made possible the impunity of such a deed as the Austrian Mirka had done upon Hermann Hoffmann, the bar-keeper; that made certain the assailant's escape, and that made of the entire matter merely a question as to which of several handy means should be employed to free the slaver in the eyes of the law. About those means there had, however, been some debate, and so it befell that, early on the Sunday evening following the shooting, Rafael Angelelli sat in a recognized New York meeting-place of the church's proselyting order, engaged in pleasant converse with Wesley Dyker, candidate for a magistracy. This place was

the back-room of a saloon. It was filled with cigarette-smoking young missionaries, who talked shop, and quoted prices, and discussed the prospects of a good season in precisely the businesslike way that men in a livestock-dealers' club talk shop, and quote prices, and discuss the prospects of a good season. Dyker had not at all wanted to come there, but O'Malley had ordered, and so, making peace with the tolerant Angelelli, he had been forced to obey. A special counsel for the sheriff of New York had once been a member of the legal corps of the missionaries and so had two State Senators: O'Malley, remembering Dyker's previous career, could see no reason for present pride.

The room was clouded with smoke. Waiters hurried about serving beer from brass platters and swabbing the small tables with damp rags. There was a buzz of conversation broken by that peculiar form of laughter which responds only to obscenities, and now and then, out of the general clamor, there arose oaths almost technical, descriptions of women that sounded like auctioneers' announcements in a horse-market, and fragments of stories in which the teller bragged of a sharp deal he had effected in capturing a slave or in bargaining with a proprietress.

"I understand," said Dyker, with his eyelids characteristically lowered, "that you want to see me in regard to something about this shooting-affair of your friend Mirka."

Angel's oily head bobbed a ready assent.

"Where's the fellow that was hurt?"

"In Bellevue."

"Is he going to die?"



"Naw; eet was only a leetle one in hees shoulder."

"Anybody else in the bar when it happened?"

"Naw."

That was better. Wesley took a sip of beer.

"Mirka was alone, too?"

"Yas."

"Did the bar-keeper see him?"

"Naw; hees back was rounda to da door."

"There'd been a quarrel beforehand, though?"

"Ah, some small word only."

"And nobody saw Mirka come back or leave the place the second time?"

Nobody had seen him.

Then how was it that the injured man, in the hospital, had said that Mirka had done the shooting?

Angel explained that Hermann based his accusation partly on an uncertain and partial glimpse of Mirka caught in the bar-mirror at the instant that the shot was fired, but largely on the preceding quarrel.

"This Hoffmann couldn't swear to Mirka's identity from that mere glimpse?"

The Italian thought not.

"Well, then," said Wesley, "it all ought to be easy enough. Every bar-keeper knows a lot of drunks that might want to hurt him."

Rafael shrugged.

"You can feex eet," he said. "Meest' O'Malley say you feex eet easy."

"But," replied Dyker, "I don't see how I can act as Mirka's lawyer, unless it is all done quickly. You know, I'm about to be elected magistrate."

"Poof!" said Angel, blowing a thin spiral of blue cigarette-smoke. "We gotta da lawyer."

"Oh!" Dyker looked up quickly, and quickly down again. "Then you want me—I see."

"Good."

The prospective magistrate began making rings on the table with his wet glass.

"But I should think there were other ways. The man hasn't been arrested yet?"

"Naw."

"Then why need the police find him?"

"Thees O'Malley say eet looka better."

"He might jump his bail."

"Naw."

"It's often done that way."

"O'Malley say 'naw'."

"Or he might go up for trial. There's no real evidence against him: nobody saw the shot fired. And besides, even if we couldn't fix things in court, which is always easy enough, we could get him a pardon as we did for Pud Morley or Frank Da Silva."

But Angel would have none of these propositions. Michael O'Malley was, it seemed, inexorable. There had been enough bail-jumping, queer verdicts, and pardons for a few months. The case must come before the new magistrate, and the new magistrate must declare that the testimony was not sufficient to warrant holding the prisoner for court.

"Where is Mirka now?" asked Dyker.

"Een Philadelph'," said Angel.

"Loafing?"

"Naw. He tooka one of heesa girls along. I am takin' care of dees other one."

"Can't we get hold of the Dutchman and make him see who's back of all this?"

"Naw; dees Dutch' ees a fool."

"Won't even be bought?"

"Naw."

"And can't be scared?"

"Naw; I tell you dees Dutch' ees a damn fool."

Wesley did not like the plan; he did not like it at all; but he was already harnessed fast, and he had learned that it was best to follow without protest the directing rein. He achieved a smile.

"All right," he agreed.

The Italian's face lighted with gratification.

"You do eet?" he asked.

"I'll arrange it; don't worry."

"Good! Good! That's good!"

Angel's pleasure was so pronounced that Dyker for a moment feared—though it would have made small difference—lest the cadet make to the entire company a public announcement of his promise. He need not, however, have worried. Rafael was wholly used to these legal fictions and to the etiquette that imposed their formal observance; his delight took the shape of an order for another pair of drinks, and, those dispatched, he leisurely got upon his little feet.

"Now," said he, "I go. I hava da businesses."

He smiled wisely at the concluding word.

Wesley also rose.

"I'll have to be getting along myself," he remarked.

"Ah, but you can stay eef you feel like," said Angel. "I maka you know deesa mens."

"Thanks. I do know most of them," replied Dyker, nodding to two or three of the nearby cadets as he spoke. "But I have some business, too. These are busy times with me."

They both made their way to the saloon's side door.

"Goin' so soon?" chorused some of the habitués as Angel moved among them.

He nodded, smiling cheerfully.

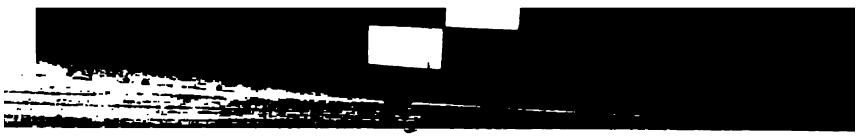
"Goin' to kop out a new skirt?" inquired one.

"Yas," responded Rafael, now with a frank, satisfied chuckle.

"Then here's luck!" cried another.

As the health was being drunk, Dyker passed through the door and turned, alone, into the cool night air of the street.

Notwithstanding his natural bias, his severe schooling, and his honestly cynical and cynically limited view of this portion of his little world, he was ashamed of what he had just seen and heard and done, and he was disgusted. He walked down the avenue in the deepened shadows, for the first time in a long while more than half inclined to ask himself whether what he was to get was worth the price that he had already begun to pay for it; and for the first time, by way of answer, frankly facing the fact that the position of a corrupt magistrate was not much worse than that of a corrupt lawyer, and that neither position was much worse, and both certainly better paid, than the position in which his task had been to render anonymous assistance to the no less



dubious course of more esteemed corporation attorneys.

He was too occupied with these reflections, disquieting and consolatory, to observe well the persons that passed him. He continued his way along the curb rather because he had started upon it than because he at all cared about whither it led him, much as he was continuing his progress in the political maze in which his lot was cast. He kept his head bent, and so he did not see a pale-faced, large-eyed woman that, turning a hasty corner, almost collided with him and then suddenly drew back and crossed the street.

There were changes in the woman's face, which might have precluded recognition. He had last seen her on the eve of a surgical operation and she had looked ill, but now, the cumulative effect of that and many other crises sat upon her, and it was only in her habitual gait, the swaying languid pace of an unstudied young animal, that he might have found enough to recall her to his memory. But Dyker's eyes were directed inward and so, when she turned aside to avoid the man that she fancied she had wronged, he did not realize that he had almost touched elbows with the woman he had once rescued, fresh from her dismissal from the sacred precincts of Mrs. Ferdinand Chamberlin's home.

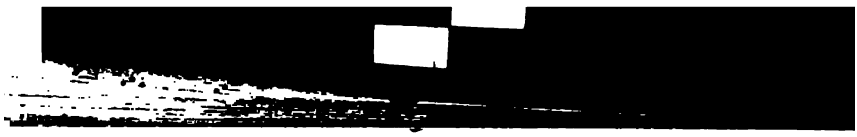
She had started away from Washington Square in the same dull pain in which she had previously left the Ninth Street boarding-house presided over by the stony-breasted Mrs. Alberta Turner; she had been only a wounded dog, whose sole desire was to

find a dark corner in which she could suffer unobserved; but slowly there reasserted itself in her torpid brain that new impulse toward a questioning of life which had so appalled Philip Beekman. The whole she could not see; her own case bulked so far in the foreground that little else of the picture was visible to her. But she knew that an ill-constructed world was against her; she concluded that all legitimate doors were closed upon her, and she felt gradually kindling a wrath that would end in general reprisal.

How she chanced into Rivington Street she did not know. She had no clear idea as to where she was to go, except that she must not return to burden Katie Flanagan. Yet, almost before she was clearly conscious of her whereabouts, she found herself accosted by a voice that proved to come from the lips of Marian Lennox.

"Mary Morton! How do you do? Where are you going? Where on earth have you been? Come in here; I'm just getting back from a walk. I am so anxious to hear how you are getting on, and I have been so disappointed because you never let me hear from you."

The rivulet of cheerful words poured from the calm-faced woman with unheeding force. Each one of them fell upon her auditor with an unintended shock. Mary, who had almost forgotten the pseudonym under which she had been presented at the Settlement, could say nothing. She was carried up the steps and into the house, up the stairs and into the deserted sitting-room on the second floor; and there she sank limply into a wicker chair beside a



magazine-littered table, tête-à-tête with her former benefactress.

Marian, all good intentions, rested her delicate chin upon her white hands.

"Now," she said, "I am anxious to hear all about you."

Mary, with a perplexed frown, looked hard at the floor.

"Why, there isn't much to tell, Miss Lennox," she replied.

"Nonsense. Of course there is, my dear. You must understand that I am interested in everything about you—in everything."

Mary's eyes sought, for a moment, the pure, cameo-like face. They could see no evil there, and they could see much kindliness.

"Well, then," she hesitated, "I don't know exactly where to begin."

"At the beginning, of course. How do you like your place?"

"Which place, Miss Lennox?"

"The place we sent you to."

"I'm not there no more."

"Not there?" Marian raised her perfectly arched brows. "But, my dear Mary, why not? Didn't you like it?"

"I didn't mind."

"Then you have found a better place?"

Again Mary studied her questioner.

"Miss Lennox," she said, "I guess you people here have all sorts of girls comin' around, don't you?"

There was a surprise in this departure, and

Marian's deep eyes mirrored it. The questioner had become the questioned.

"A great many kinds," she replied. "Why do you ask?"

"Girls that work at all sorts of things?"

"To be sure."

"And you want to help 'em?"

"We try to help them all."

"Yes; I thought so. *Can* you help 'em all, Miss Lennox?"

"When they let us, I think we can."

"Then what do you do about them that hasn't been straight?"

Marian softly caught her breath.

"Oh," she said; "I——" She had learned, since their last meeting, a little about the girls concerning whom Mary was inquiring, and she had learned much regarding the Settlement's attitude toward them; but she had learned, also, that the work of the place most lay with the flowers that bloomed among the weeds, and so, "Well, you see," she lamely continued, "Well, we do the best we can."

"What's that, please, Miss Lennox? I've got a particular reason for wanting to know."

Marian understood. She spoke softly, and softly laced and interlaced her long white fingers, resting in her lap.

"We do the best we can, Mary," she repeated, more confidently. "When we have investigated the case and are sure such a girl is sorry, or wasn't entirely to blame, and that she means to do what is right in the future, we make her our personal friend. We encourage her to come here and talk to us and



get all the help possible. We have her around to all the entertainments——"

"Can she learn?" asked Mary.

"Learn?" Marian's voice was puzzled.

"Can she go to the clubs and the classes they talked about when I was here first?" explained Mary.

Marian shook a doubtful head.

"You see that wouldn't do, right away, Mary," she said. "We have to think of the other girls, and we have to protect the girls that *are* straight as well as help those that haven't been. These are their clubs, after all, and they wouldn't like it, if they knew. It wouldn't be just for us to deceive them, and they have the first claim on our protection."

"Why?"

It was the hardest question that Marian Lennox had ever had put to her. She tried to form an answer, but though she could think of many that seemed to her logical, she could think of none that seemed kind. Sympathy sprang to her eyes. She put out her hands.

"Mary!" she said.

But Mary had received her reply.

"It don't matter, Miss Lennox," she said, and she said it so calmly and so coldly that Marian involuntarily drew back in her chair. "I just wondered, that was all."

She stopped an instant. Her hostess tried to speak and could not, but presently the girl pursued:

"I wasn't square with you, that night you gave me the recommedation to Mrs. Turner, Miss Lennox. I suppose I ought to've told you all about my-

self, but I had to get work, an' I knew if I told you I wouldn't get no job. I'd been—I'd been in a house. I wanted to get away, an' a man had just got me out a little more'n a month or so before."

"It was not exactly honest of you," said Marian.

She was sorry as soon as she had spoken, but Mary, showing no sign of hurt or resentment, was continuing before reparation or explanation could be made.

Very simply she told the hard outward facts of her story. She did not give the history of her capture, because her experience with Mrs. Turner, with the homely little woman that had called at the employment-agency, and with Philip Beekman had shown her that this could not lessen the extent of her contamination. Honestly rejecting her deception of Marian, goaded by that glimpse of Wesley Dyker into an impulse to make, at any cost to herself, the amend of truth for what fault she had committed, she was still more powerfully moved by a determination to accept without reservation the part that the world had now assigned her, and to fight under no colors save her own.

Marian, her fine face drawn with pain, heard the narrative in a silence broken only when Mary had concluded with her departure from the hospital. The girl had mentioned no names.

"And even this one man," murmured Marian at last, "even this man who had the courage to rescue you—even he was a visitor at such a place?"

"Why, of course," said Mary, as yet unused to the idea of any blame attaching to the mere male

patronage of slavery. "How else could I have got him for help?"

"But you said he was in love with that woman who conducted the—house."

"With Miss Rose?"

"What did you call her?"

"Mrs. Rose Légère she called herself, but I guess that wasn't her name. Yes, he was kind of in love with her. He was one of her favorites anyhow, but that was just because he had a pull with the politicians, you see. She let him love her so's she could work him, an' when I put him wise to that, he was glad to help me."

Marian clinched her fist.

"The abominable cur!" she said.

"Oh, no! Not that," protested Mary. She had failed this man by retracting her affidavit, but she meant to be loyal to him wheresoever she could. His name slipped from her with no thought of consequences. "It took a lot of nerve an' goodness to do for me what Mr. Dyker done."

Marian's gaze became fixed. She was a woman whose whole training had shaped her against sudden betrayal of emotion, but she needed every precept of that training now. She did not start, she did not flush, but her hands moved to the arms of her chair and gripped them hard.

"Did you say Mr. Wesley Dyker?" she asked.

Her voice did not betray her to the woman opposite, but Mary feared lest her own desire to defend her deliverer had betrayed him.

"That's who it was, Miss Lennox," she admitted, adding anxiously: "But I didn't go to mention it.

You won't tell it to no one that could use it against him, will you?"

"Oh, no!" Marian laughed a short, hard laugh and rose to hide whatever might be seen of her confusion. "Oh, no," she said; "I shan't speak of this to any enemy."

Her movement had seemed to Mary as a sign that the interview was ending, but the laughter chilled her. She also rose, and stood before her hostess.

"You don't know him?" she tremulously inquired.

"I think," said Marian, "that I used to know somebody by some such name, but I do not know him now. He need not disturb himself, and when you see him you need not disturb him by saying that you spoke of this to me."

"Oh, I won't see him," Mary assured her. "It ain't likely I'll ever see see him again."

Marian's eyes searched her, but they detected nothing disingenuous.

"You have quarreled?" she demanded.

"No, only he wanted me to testify against Miss Rose, an' I was too scared. I just hid myself."

There was a simple appeal in the bare words that brought their hearer to her better self. Within her there burned a new and mounting fire, but her face was cool and her actions were reasoned.

"Mary," she said, determined to sink herself and to be true to her code, "I am very sorry to have heard all this. I am sorry that I seemed harsh when I said you had not been quite honest with us."

"But I hadn't been, Miss Lennox."



"It was not altogether your fault if you weren't, Mary. I begin to see that it must be rather hard, sometimes, to be quite honest."

"It is, sometimes."

"But you have been honest now with me, and I want to help you. I want you to come around here in the way I described. I want you to come often."

She paused, and then, as Mary did not respond, she added:

"Will you?"

Mary's eyes were on the floor.

"Do you think you can get me a job?" she asked. "Do you think anyone can?"

Marian had thought nothing about it.

"Why, really, I don't know, Mary. But I suppose so. Anyhow, I'll see what I can do—though of course I shouldn't feel justified in procuring you a position under false pretenses. You understand that?"

"Yes," said Mary, "I understand."

"And, at any rate, you will come around to-morrow?"

Still Mary did not look up.

"You will come?" repeated Marian.

"Yes, Miss Lennox," said Mary.

"Very well, then: to-morrow afternoon."

Something in the girl's attitude made Marian uneasy. She insisted on her point, but again Mary was slow to answer, and again Marian asked:

"Will you?"

"Yes, Miss Lennox."

"At five o'clock, Mary."

"I'll try, Miss Lennox."

"Promise."

Mary stepped to the door. She looked up and put out her hand, but, although Marian saw this, and started to respond, the settlement-worker's hand fell back to her side. Mary seemed first to observe and then not at all to have observed it.

"I promise," she said quietly, and left the room and the house.

Inside, Marian was looking at her hand as if, because it had refused to seek that of the woman who, she concluded, had shared Rose Légère's intimacy with Dyker, it had been scorched by the new passion aflame in her own heart. Outside, Mary, tramping the evening street, saw, in her memory of that hand withheld, a hand pointing her definitely away from the keeping of her promise, pointing her onward down the street as the place where, for the future, she must live and work.



XXIII

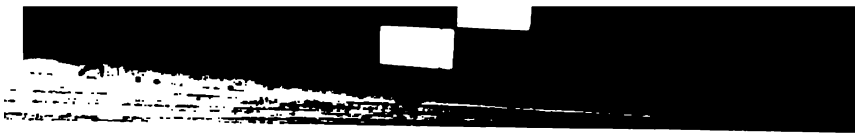
KATIE'S DAY

THE election came, and went in just the way that everybody expected it to go. Wesley Dyker's political craft, along with many others, was carried on the inrushing waves of his party's success to the haven where he had desired it to rest, and the prosperity that had raised the price of votes to five dollars apiece immediately resumed its unostentatious levy upon the voters against the next election. The defeated candidates forgot their so recent denunciations and congratulated their victorious opponents; the victorious opponents forgot their tinsel pledges and resumed the safe and sure business of government for revenue only, and the population of New York, like the population of most cities, forgot all the good things that had been pledged it, and turned its energies to the everyday task of taking what it could get.

Meanwhile Carrie Berkowicz, homely and hopeless, pursued, with a dogged earnestness, the path that conditions had hewn for her, and always she pursued it not alone. As the waiting beast prowls behind the slowly weakening traveler lost in a jungle, as the bird of prey circles calmly above the wounded man in the forest, as both beast and bird stand by until there comes the moment when strength can no longer oppose them, so, day after day, rarely speak-

ing, but always watching, there followed in this girl's footsteps the dark young man with curling hair and shining teeth, who had accosted her on Waverley Place. He seemed to watch for her morning entrance upon the street, and to be the last to see her when she dragged her wasting body into the tenement at night. Much of the time he dogged her like a foul shadow. She would pass him in a doorway, she would see him lounging at a corner, she would catch glimpses of him across a crowded street. There were times when she feared to look up lest she should have to answer that prosperous leer and ornate bow; there were others, at last, when, as his well-fed body brushed by her, she almost plucked at his sleeve with her hungry hands. He never stopped, but sometime, she knew, he would stop; he never said more than "Good-morning" or "Good-evening," but sometime, sometime soon, he would, she knew, say more.

And meanwhile, too, the politically unaffected routine of the Lennox department-store began gradually to provide for one of its victims at least the sense of approaching variety: Katie Flanagan realized that the end of her usefulness—as that phrase is termed by employers, boarding-school principals, and others in authority—was rapidly nearing. She managed to avoid the immaculate Mr. Porter for one week, and, but for her worry over the condition of the wounded Hermann, would have had moments when the sport was amusing. As the task-master paused at her counter one time during the second week, she achieved a sick aunt, who sufficed to account for her occupied evenings. But when the



days and the nights dragged by with no change for either the better or the worse in the condition of this bed-ridden relative, and when the girl's invention began to flag, and her spirit to tire, Mr. Porter's glance grew more and more searching, his manner less and less warm, and Katie knew that she must soon retreat or surrender.

"I have not seen much of you lately, Miss Flanagan," remarked Mr. Porter as, late one afternoon, he came mincing to the counter where she stood.

"I've been here pretty regular, Mr. Porter," answered Katie.

Mr. Porter caressed a gray side-whisker.

"Um," said he. "I presume, then, that your grandmother is no worse."

"It's me aunt, sir," rejoined Katie, with the mental addition: "You didn't catch me that time, you ould tom-cat." And she added: "The good woman's some better, thanks."

"I see," said Mr. Porter, and, indeed, his cold gaze seemed to see a great deal more than he was inclined to mention. "At this rate of improvement, I hope you will soon find time to consider the matter we discussed that day in my office."

"I hope that, Mr. Porter," smiled Katie.

"Yes," concluded Mr. Porter, turning from her —he always turned away when he was most significant. "I hope so, too, for I can't well keep your case under advisement much longer."

Several of the salesgirls nearby laughed openly, and Katie, when he was out of sight, looked at them with a grimace half sad, half mocking.

The next morning she was transferred to a bargain-counter for the day.

What the outcome might have been there is no imagining. What it was depended, at any rate in part, upon the fact that, on what proved to be her last day at the shop, she had come to work with a tired body and an aching head. She had sat up half the night in a long endeavor to persuade Carrie to leave the futile battle of the strikers and turn to other employment; and, when Carrie had rejected all proposals on the ground that, though the fight was lost, she knew no other sort of work, Katie had spent about all the remainder of the dark hours in an attempt to convince her roommate that the Irish girl's wages were enough to support both of them for some time to come. The result, so far as went her conduct at the store, was a temper ready to explode with the first spark, and that spark came when, in midafternoon, a nervous woman, who persisted in examining everything and buying nothing, interpreted Katie's lassitude as indifference and so reported it to the floor-walker.

Katie was sent for to come to Mr. Porter's office.

Mr. Porter looked up from the light at his desk, and then down again. He stroked a whisker.

"Sit down, Miss Flanagan," he said.

"Thanks," replied Katie, "I can take it just as well standin'."

"Take what?" asked Mr. Porter.

"Anythin' at all you have to say," said Katie.

Mr. Porter continued to look at his desk and, by the name of "Miss Flanagan," addressed it severely.

"Miss Flanagan," he said, "you have again been



reported to me for discourtesy to a customer. The other case had not yet been adjusted. It might have been adjusted had not your cousin——"

"Me aunt," prompted Katie.

"Your aunt," frowned Mr. Porter to his desk, "had not your aunt been so disinclined to recover."

"She was gettin' absent treatment from a bad doctor."

"I know nothing of that——"

"I think meself it was Malicious Animal Magnetism."

"Please do not interrupt," said Mr. Porter, shaking his whiskers at the desk. "I say that the previous case was not adjusted, though it might have been, if your mother had not remained so ill."

"Me aunt."

"Your aunt, if you prefer it. Now comes this second case, and really, I am curious to know whether you can suggest anything that will make me regard it with the smallest degree of lenience."

He looked again at the desk, as if the desk were the case he had referred to, but neither the desk nor Katie answered.

"If you cannot," he at last concluded, "I see no course but one for me to pursue."

Katie folded her arms across her breast and tossed her black head.

"There's only one thing I can think of," said she, and waited.

Mr. Porter breathed hard.

"And what," he inquired, still without looking at her, "is that?"

Katie took a soft step forward. She rested her

hands upon the arm of his desk and leaned her face toward him.

"Don't you know?" she asked in a low voice.

Mr. Porter shot, from the corner of his eyes, one of his crooked glances at her.

"I am not quite sure," he said.

"Then," replied Katie, "I'll tell you. The only one thing I can think of that'd get you to let me off is the only one you can think of yourself—*an' that's the one I won't do!*"

Her voice, which had begun so softly, ended in a loud note. Her hands, which had been open, clinched. Her body, which had been relaxed, stiffened.

Mr. Porter sprang back from her, looked at her with hot fright in his usually cool eyes, and then shrank as far away as his desk-armchair would permit.

"Miss Flanagan," he spluttered, "not so loud, please! You will alarm the store."

"I wish I could alarm it!" said Katie.

"But what—what—I don't understand——"

"Yes, you do understand, all right, all right, Mr. Porter. I know what you want; I've known it all along, an' if I hadn't liked to make a fool of you, I'd have told you long since what I tell you now: *You won't get it!*"

If it were possible for Mr. Porter to grow whiter than his habit, he grew whiter then.

"I shall—I shall ring for assistance!" he protested.

"No you won't; you won't dare; you'll sit there, an' write me out a recommendation an' an order for



me pay—if your hand ain't shakin' too much, an' if it is, I'll write it for you."

And he did write it. After one look at her, he wrote it without a word, and "without," as Katie carefully stipulated, "any dockin' for the last offense," and as she left him she delivered one Parthian bolt.

"Remember me to the girl you start after in the mornin'," she said; "an' when you go home to-night, just give me grandmother-mother-aunt-cousin's best regards to your grown-up great-grandchildren."

The taste in which her revolution expressed itself may have been as doubtful as the courage that inspired it was certain; but, had Mr. Porter been able to see into her mind as she hurried homeward, he would have been gratified at what he found there. The excitement had gone, and with it the bravery. She had preserved her individual ideals, but she now realized at what a cost she had preserved them. Against masculine attack it was sometimes inspiriting to defend herself, but to the slow and continuous advance of penury she well knew that, at last, she must succumb.

She passed her ugly little parish-church, and, remembering that she had missed her last confession, entered its forbidding doors.

The swinging portal closed softly behind her. It shut out the glare of the day, it shut out the noises of the street, and it seemed to shut out the entire malicious power of the world. Inside the cruel sunshine became kindly shade and comforting candlelight; the only sound was the occasional footfall of an unseen suppliant, and on the distant high altar,

shimmering and white at the end of the long perspective of the empty aisle, there rested the power she believed more powerful than all on earth beside.

She made her confession—not the easy and formal confession of the strong, who need it most, but the frank probing question and full reply of the weak, who can profit by it least—and at its end she received not only the benediction that she traced to Heaven, but the shrewd advice that came direct from the big heart of a worldly-wise and beneficent man.

"Thank you, father," she added to the words of the ritual, as she rose to go, "I'll do me best to stick it out, but times be when it's powerful hard."

The experience had encouraged her, but, when she came at last into her barren hóme, there fell a blow that shook to its foundations the structure of hope which she had so briefly reared. On the bare table was a single sheet of paper, and on the paper was written:

"*Dear Katie:*—I have gone away. There was no use in saying good-by, for that would only have hurt both of us, and I could not have made you see that I was right not to board here any longer at your expense, any more than you could make me see last night that you were right on your side. Pretty soon I'll come to see you and bring the money I owe you, but I can't ever pay you back all your other goodness, although I would give my right arm to do it.

"Another thing. By the time you get this letter Hermann will be to see you at the store. I was around to Bellevue yesterday, and we kept it as a surprise for you that he was coming out today. I hope by this time you two will have fixed it all up; but if you haven't, well, I never talked to you about it much before, but I feel I must say something now, because I seem to know more about life than I used to: take him, Katie dear, for there are only horrors ahead for any girls like you and me if we don't



marry. He's a fine man and you love him, and the two of you will do better together than you can do apart.

"Now, good-by. Don't please bother to hunt for me—I won't be on picket-duty any more, but *I am all right.*

"Lovingly,
"CARRIE."

Katie Flanagan put down the note. She went to the narrow window and gazed blindly at the unsightly wing of the tenement across the narrow court outside.

"All right?" she said, the paper crumpling in her tightened hand. "All right? The poor girl's got no money an' no job. I know what she's thinkin', an' there's no good followin'. 'All right,' she says! Dear God, pity her: she means, 'all wrong'!"

Katie felt too deeply for her lost comrade to think much, if at all, of that portion of the note which touched her own interest. Her eyes clouded; her shoulders shook; she fell upon her knees before the window-sill, and it was there that Hermann's strong arms went about her neck.

Even then, glad as she was to have him back again, she could do little but sob brokenly with her cheek against his breast, while he told her how he had gone to the store, learned of her dismissal, and come at once to the tenement, not pausing to knock when he heard her sobs. He comforted her as best he could, but it was some time before any comfort availed.

All had ended well for Hermann, but all had not easily so ended. His wound had proved relatively slight, and he was sound and whole again: but, the

day before his dismissal from the hospital, Schleger had waited upon him shamefacedly to confess that the rulers of the ward, dissatisfied with the barkeeper's Laodicean attitude toward their political labors, and urged by Mirka's friends, had forbidden his re-engagement in the saloon. Ludwig had been sorry, but helpless, and then, after exacting a score of promises, had disclosed his plan to open incognito a grocery-store on the West Side, himself remaining in charge of the saloon and Hoffmann appearing, on a good salary, as the owner of the new venture.

Katie looked up at him with eyes shining blue through a dispersing mist of tears.

"An' what about the dirty Dago that shot you?" she inquired.

Hermann smiled broadly. His face was thinner and not so ruddy as once, but it was cheerful still and more determined than of old.

"The Austrian?" he asked.

"'Tis the same thing," said she.

"Ach, vell, I guess ve von't do nussing about him."

"You won't be lettin' him go?"

"Vhy not? Dere's none to swear fur me and a hun'red to swear fur him. I kind of belief Schleger gif me de new blace as brice fur keepin' quiet, so dere's nussing to gain und efferysing to lose."

At first she would not hear of it, and she used her opposition to this dropping of the charge against Mirka as if it were an argument properly formed to oppose the next scheme that he proposed to her. But he had found her in her moment of weakness



when he had come to her in his hour of strength renewed.

"No," he said firmly, "und dis evenin' ve'll be married. I got der license; I stopped at der church; Father Kelly's vatin'—dis evenin', Katie."

The world was slipping from beneath her feet. She did not answer.

"In two year'," he went on, "one part of dot store ve'll own. Katie, it's our chance; und in de meanvhile, if der Herr Gott sends der babies—und pray Gott he vill—dey von't at least do no vorse as ve hof done."

He drew her tighter, but she twisted in his arms and got free, so that he held only one of her firm hands. They stood there face to face, between them the unfathomable chasm of sex, their feet trembling at its brink.

Across the areaway the straight shafts of the setting sun caught the dirty little window-panes of the nearby squalid rooms and turned them to a shining glory. The rays were reflected into Katie's own room; they burnished the cheap paper into cloth of gold, they touched the floor and gilded it, they made of the rickety table a thing of splendor, and of the worn chairs fairy thrones. Hermann's blonde head was crowned with a halo, and as he looked at the girl, against the background of those yellow windows like a Madonna against the background that the Etruscan painters loved, he saw in her eyes what he had never seen before.

In the momentary struggle the coils of her black hair had loosened and fallen below her waist. They framed a face no longer strong with restraint, hand-

some from the flush of battle against the world, no longer set and self-reliant, but a face through which shone the light of the life-force, the motive-power of the universe, a beautiful face, white, frightened, wonderful.

"Can—can you really love me?"

She scarcely said the words. Rather her lips formed them with no voice behind. But he had heard her before her lips so much as moved.

"Ach," he cried, "I hof alvays lofed you, Katie, but now it is somesing new und more. Katie, I sink —I belief sings I neffer belief before, und I sink it must be der blessing of Gott dot I can *see* in you."

"An' there won't be anny other woman?"

"You are *all* vomen, Katie."

She raised her head.

"Yes, Hermann," she said, "I think I will be all women for you. I will be all you want. I will work an' share, good luck an' bad. I never before was glad I knew how to work, but now I *will* be all you want—all, *all!*"

He put her hand to his lips, and held it there an instant: Fifth Avenue does these things, casually, no better than the Bowery, when the Bowery has a mind for them.

"Katie," he whispered.

She took her hand away. She tried to laugh a little, but the laughter, clear and silvery, caught suddenly in her throat. Her mouth twisted, and she raised the hand and put her lips where his had been.

Reeling with the tremor of that sight, his arms recaptured her, and this time held her fast. She swayed and yielded. Her own arms answered his,



and his lips met, for the first time freely, the lips she had so bravely kept for him.

The case against Mirka was then and there dismissed, and the High Court handed down a final decision *in re* Hoffmann *vs.* Flanagan.

XXIV

MARIAN'S WAY

WESLEY DYKER looked with unaffected approval about the second-story front room in Rivington Street. He saw the calmly colored walls, the excellent mats upon the floor, the ordered writing-desk and, near the center, the heavy library-table, covered with carefully piled magazines.

"Hello!" he said, nodding easily to the woman that stood motionless before him.

The woman's answer was not ready, but Dyker, whose eyes were on surroundings almost as animate, pursued:

"Upon my word, you have it rather cozy here, considering the neighborhood. I'm not half so well fixed myself. I'm glad to see that, Marian, and I'm more than glad to see you."

He raised his heavy lids to look at her. He had resolved when, a short while before, she had sent for him, to make no mention of their long separation. He was sure that the sending meant he was to have a chance to recall to her the superior wisdom that had expressed itself in his advice against working among the poor; but of the time that had elapsed since that advice was given he had meant to say nothing. Always he had confidently expected this

moment, and, now that it had come, she must find him prepared. He put out his hand.

But Marian was thinking of how, in this same room, she had said good-by to Mary. She compressed her lips a moment before answering, and, when she did answer, it was only to say, quite calmly:

"I don't want to shake hands with you, Wesley."

Day and night the words that Mary had so innocently dropped concerning Dyker had stirred the fire in Marian's breast. Supposing that her protégée had shared with Rose the easy caresses of Wesley, even at a time when Marian had been on the point of accepting them, the failure of that protégée to return to the Settlement for aid or consolation had made Marian the prey to a hundred contending emotions. She was glad that Mary had not come back, because Mary adrift meant Mary suffering. She was sorry that Mary had not come back, because she wanted to ask the girl so many things that she had at first neglected to ask. She doubted Mary and was ashamed of her doubts; she doubted Dyker and was still ashamed. One thought tore at another, and all tore at her heart.

On entering the Settlement she had left Dyker in a proud anger that forbade her acting upon his offer to come to her whenever she should send for him; on dismissing Mary she had so framed her promise of secrecy that she might repeat to Wesley the unfortunate woman's unconscious accusation; and on twisting and turning the reptilian thing over in her mind, she said in one breath that she could not send for Dyker and could not be at peace unless she did send. The fiercest passion that a conventional woman

has is the passion for the knowledge that will most likely clinch her unhappiness. Marian was certain that she must know the truth, and she told herself that she was certain of but one fact beside: that she did not love this man; that she had never loved him—and, presumably because of that, she had at last, on this day shortly after the election, incontinently telephoned to him to come to Rivington Street.

She had said to herself that it was unfair to condemn him unheard. She had replied to herself that she did not care enough about him either to condemn or to acquit. She had ended by the realization that, deny it as she might, the fact of condemnation remained; and she had inclined solely toward the attitude of impartial justice until, in the briefest possible time after receiving her message, Dyker had entered this room. Then, immediately, her mood had once more changed, as it was to change so often during the ensuing interview; she had left the bench and had become the prosecutor.

Perhaps Dyker's appearance was in part to blame for this. She had, of course, not seen him since that summer parting; it is seldom pleasant for a woman to find that separation from her has left no scar upon an admirer, and it is always annoying to a district-attorney to detect no consciousness of guilt in the countenance of the accused; yet Dyker had come into her presence with a buoyant step and a ready smile. The pressure of campaigning had lessened, though it could not wholly check, the progress of his dissipations, and his face still flaunted the tokens of its former glory. His eyes were not noticeably more timid than of old, and his mouth

was, as of old, hidden. Add to this the pleasure, still fresh, of his election, and the satisfaction of a man fancying himself just placed in a position to say "I told you so" to the woman he loves, and it will be seen that Magistrate Dyker, if not at his best, had been at least in a moment of expansion.

And now she had said that she would not take his hand! He could scarcely believe his ears.

"You don't want—I am afraid I do not understand you, Marian," he said.

Her great brown eyes looked steadily into his puzzled gaze.

"Sit down, please," she responded.

Mechanically, he drew a deep wicker chair to the window, and obeyed her.

She sat opposite him and, for fully a minute, while with galloping brain he watched her, she looked through the glass at crowded, shuffling Rivington Street.

"It is simple enough, Wesley," she at last resumed. "Before I can think of renewing anything like my old friendly attitude toward you——"

"Your friendly attitude!"

"It was scarcely more than that. Before I can renew it, there is something that must be explained."

Dyker's own attitude was still that of the average lover, and the average lover cannot see beyond his own shadow.

"Oh,"—he was momentarily relieved and prepared, in consequence, to show a proper magnanimity —"you needn't explain, Marian! I knew you would find that I was right, and that this was no place for you. I appreciate perfectly how you feel: you have

been disappointed and disillusioned, and it is like you handsomely to want to confess that you were wrong. But let's merely consider that done, and say no more about it."

He ended in a warmth of good feeling; but she did not seem inclined to accept this proffer, and, as he paused, he wondered what was in her gaze.

"No," she said, "you are not quite correct in your surmise. I have been disappointed and disillusioned. I have been disappointed in one of the people among whom I have been working; but I have been disillusioned in regard to you."

She stopped. He began to guess now what was back of those calm eyes of hers. Disillusioned in regard to him? At the first breath it seemed incredible, but at the next his mind filled with the ghosts of his experience, the grim figures that compose the pageant of that real life of a man, upon which he never raises the curtain for the feminine eyes most dear to him.

"In regard to me?" he echoed. He was wondering, in hidden panic, which especial image had been revealed to her, and he sought defense in general denial. "You have been listening to East Side neighborhood gossip, Marian, and I shouldn't have believed it of you. You have heard one of the hundreds of groundless ante-election libels that are the common ammunition used against anyone in politics."

Her face, always fair, was gently tinted.

"What I have heard," she replied, "I heard from somebody that has nothing to do with politics."

"Down here," insisted Dyker, still seeking to dislodge the enemy and force it into the open field of recognition, "down here all the men have something to do with politics."

"This was a woman, Wesley."

He had feared that. He had feared it when she first spoke of coming to the Settlement. But he wasted no time in such thought; he must, before he committed himself, discover which of several possible women, was concerned.

"Oh," he laughed, "the women are mixed up in political gossip, too; or, at any rate," he added, "they are always glad to repeat what their menfolk don't hesitate to tell them."

"The woman I refer to was a part of the thing she told."

Marian said it softly, but her white throat trembled.

Dyker looked at her swiftly, and as swiftly lowered his eyes. Instantly now he guessed what it was that she had heard; an instant more and he thought the thing improbable. Then, resolved at all events not to approach self-betrayal by showing his intuition, he assumed the point of view of the lawyer.

"Marian," he said, pulling at his mustache that she might see—as she did—that his hand was steady, "is this fair? Is it right to condemn me on a charge of which I know nothing and because of evidence of which I haven't heard a syllable?"

"No," she answered, "it isn't fair. That is why I sent for you."

He bit his lip, but faced her.

"Well," he said, "what is it?"

Steadily she met his renewed gaze until his eyes failed her.

Even then her own eyes, never wavering, could find in him not enough to determine her. The desire to get at the truth, whatever the truth might be, was plying its angry whip upon her shoulders. When Mary had spoken, Marian had received the intelligence as innocently imparted fact. But now the man before her gave nothing that her inexperience could set down as a sign of what she considered a great sin.

"Wesley," she began, leaning towards him, "the girl that told me this told it inadvertently. More than that, she did not even know that I had ever heard of you. She did not want to hurt you: she was grateful to you, because you had rescued her."

His intuition, then, had not failed him: it was Violet.

"Why," he smiled, his heart heavy with the fear of losing Marian's love, his lips still sparring for a more open lead, "I am afraid I'm no knight-errant, Marian, to go about rescuing damsels in distress." But he did not like the sound of the phrase, and, seeing that she liked it no better, he explained: "You surely remember how I feel about these poor women."

"But she said that your politics brought you into touch with the worst sort of them."

Marian paused there to give him another chance, but his only protest was:

"Not my politics. The duties of my profession, before I was elected a magistrate, sometimes made



it necessary to defend such women. You must have known that. There was no dishonor there."

"And my informant added," continued Marian, "that you used your political influence to gain their friendship, perhaps even to protect them, and"—she felt the depths before her; her cheeks went hot; her brown eyes filled—"and certainly to—to——"

She faltered.

He felt it and looked up with anger in his eyes.

"To what?" he demanded.

She clasped her damp hands tight.

"To live with them," she said.

Though he had expected the implication, he had hardly expected so close an approach to the specific, and therefore the start to which it behooved him to give way was not altogether disingenuous.

"Marian!" he cried.

She bent her head.

"Do you believe *that?*" he asked.

The accusation uttered, sick uncertainty gripped and tossed her again.

"I don't know what to believe."

"But how can you think I would be capable of such things? The girl lied."

Her judgment swayed dizzily. Between word and word she was now for and now against him.

"I can't think of any motive that this girl might have to lie," she said.

"How do you know what motive she has?" returned Dyker, realizing in what good stead his training as a pleader of bad cases might stand him. "How do you know what political enemies of mine

her to you? You say that, one is,
on, she is a vile woman——"
not say that."
said she charged herself with being part
alleged business. You confessed that you
disappointed in her personally. What pos-
sible credit can be given to the story of a woman
that begins by admitting such abominations?"

Marian tried to speak, but indecision choked her.

"I tell you, you were tricked," he pursued, with a glib rapidity that she did not know whether to attribute to innocence or guilt. "I may have lost a case for some friend of this girl. I may have won a suit against one of her hangers-on. There are men in the lower sort of politics, I'm ashamed to say, that don't hesitate to use such tools, and I have offended a good many of them. Before you considered this story true, don't you feel that you should have thought of one of these explanations?"

"I don't know," Marian faltered. The relentless tide of her emotions now set in again in his favor. Mary had told her story so calmly, with so little feeling concerning her own sufferings, that Marian kept wondering if it might not have been an invention. She was sure that, all along, somewhere in her heart, she had wanted to think the best of him; wanted, despite her accusing jealousy, to acquit him. "I don't know," she repeated despairingly; "but"—and the tide began to flow once more—"unless I can be certain of her motive for lying to me, don't you see, Wesley, don't you see that I must have proof of your innocence from you?"

She looked at him in wide appeal. The undertow



it p[illegible]aught her, and she was crying for help from [illegible]ore. She knew now that she loved him, and she had learned the ultimate tragedy of love: that love and mistrust may be one.

"How can I know anything?" she went on. "How can I be sure of anything? How *can* I understand such a world as this? It seems as if all the earth was lying to me, and as if all the earth could lie and still look honest. I trusted the girl; I trusted you. I beg of you to prove to me that I was right only when I trusted you. Wesley,"—she almost extended her arms to him—"tell me that you didn't do it!"

Dyker saw his advantage, but decided that the way to keep it was to be firm. He spoke quickly, yet coldly.

"Who was this woman?" he asked.

"Do you think I ought to tell you?" she pleaded.

"Ought to tell me? Why, Marian, how else am I to prove what you ask me to prove? If you are to be at all fair with me, how can you start by hiding the false witnesses against me?"

He was right, she felt.

"Did you ever hear," she asked, "of Mary Morton?"

Too late to weigh his words he remembered the name that the girl whom he had called Violet had signed to her affidavit. Before that recollection was clear to him, he made his reply in the deceit that is the refuge of all the confused.

"I never did."

"You are sure?"

"Absolutely";—he had to keep it up now—"al-

though, if she is the sort of woman she says she is, she probably has as many aliases as a safe-cracker."

"But this girl—I should think you would not forget her if you had ever known her: she must have been good-looking once. She has blue eyes and brown hair. You could see from her face that she has suffered, but you could see that she used to be almost beautiful. She has the walk of a queen."

"I don't know her."

"Think."—Marian was still intent upon certainty.—"When I saw her she was both times dressed alike, though on her second visit her clothes, first new, had grown a little shabby. She wore a cloak—I forget its color, but it was dark—and a beaver hat. She——"

He knew those clothes; he had reason to; but his interruption was in strict accord with his previous denial:

"There are thousands of women answering that vague description. I am sure, however, that I don't know this one."

Marian did not observe that, on his own showing, his assurance was without foundation. Her words had brought Mary vividly before her and, for a minute, she well-nigh forgot her own distress in the misery of that figure.

"She has had a great deal of trouble," said Marian. "Why, from what she told me, these girls must be worse treated than the blacks in the Congo; they must be far worse off than our own American negro slaves used to be."

"No doubt—if what she said was true. But I know it was not true. My profession has made me



see a great deal of these poor women, and I know that if they are slaves it is because they want to be." He waved away the whole matter with a toss of his hand. He wanted some information, and he did not want to show why he wanted it. "That all goes to prove that if it was she who told you this foul story about me, then the story was that of a born liar," he declared. "You say she was here twice. What were the circumstances?"

She told him.

He breathed more freely. He had only to convince Marian and get her to quit her work in disgust before further gossip should reach her.

"And so you don't know her?" she concluded.

"No."

"Nor Mrs. Rose Légère?"

"I certainly know of that person," he said—it was the part of wisdom to admit some knowledge. "Nobody that knows anything about our police-courts, as I have had to know, can be entirely ignorant of her. She is one of the most notorious women in New York. I know a great deal about her, but, except for one occasion, when I saw her in a station-house, I have never set eyes on her in my life."

He spoke with such precision that Marian caught a gratified breath.

"Is she another Settlement visitor?" inquired Wesley, devoutly hoping that no miracle of reformation had, since their last meeting, been wrought upon Rose.

"No, she is not. It was she that was said to have been one of your—your friends, until she made friends with your political enemies. The girl that

told me was, of course, the Mary Morton I have mentioned. She said that you were intimate with this Mrs. Légère, and I understood that even Mary——"

Dyker was genuinely glad to find some accusation that he could deny with truth.

"Never!" he cried.

Something in that word and his utterance of it made her look at him hard.

"She didn't want to tell the story," Marian insisted. "I got it from her. How could it have been the result of malice or a plot? Didn't I tell you that she said you had rescued her from the Légère woman's house?"

Dyker reflected. He wished that he had been as sweeping in his discrediting of Violet, under the pseudonym of Mary Morton, as he had been in his discrediting of Rose. Failing that, he might even have explained this rescue and have become something of a hero. Both opportunities were, however, gone. He must make the best of what remained.

"Marian," he said, speaking slowly, quite calmly, and with no small appearance of sincerity of purpose, "I needn't bring you any proof of this Légère woman's bad character—the qualities of that character you yourself know—and as for this Morton girl, I can only fall back on what I have already pointed out to you. You say she confesses her evil life: how can you, then, credit anything an admittedly abandoned creature may have told you?"

"Can't the worst of women tell the truth sometimes?"



"Practically never."

"But,"—Marian passed a weary hand across her forehead—"how could this girl be in a position to know what she says she knows, if she hadn't led just the kind of life that you say makes her an inevitable liar?"

It was an excellent sort of answer. Dyker tossed his head.

"I am hurt, Marian," he said. "I thought you had some faith in me; I thought you knew me. I don't see how you can persist in this attitude—how you can say these things. Why, I have been in your house: I have known you and your father; whereas these people—Marian, I love you; why should I lie to you?"

She had been keeping her hand upon her forehead, but she lowered it now to her eyes, where it was joined by its mate.

"I don't know," she moaned. "That's just it: I don't know."

"Then what," he asked, "can I do to convince you? I won't upbraid you; I won't be harsh. My sane course would be to pay no attention to accusations from such a character as this Mary Morton, and your sane course would be to pay no attention to them. But I know how things are in this neighborhood; I know the bad atmosphere you have been breathing ever since you came down here. Long ago I told you exactly what would happen; I foresaw it all. I told you when you insisted on going into this work that these women would poison your mind, distort your vision, make you doubt all that is best in life. Apparently, they have succeeded;

but I don't speak of that. Marian, unless it was in some police-court—perhaps at the time I saw Rose Légère—I never saw this girl in my life. I don't understand her enmity any better than you do. It may spring from some imagined wrong to one of her friends, or it may be a political plot. But, except as it affects your regard for me, I don't care anything about it. All that I do care about, all that I do want to accomplish is to restore you to a normal view of things, get you out of these foul mental and material surroundings, and bring you back to your own proper world. I want to do this and to make you know the truth concerning myself. Tell me what will bring this about, and I'll do it without a moment's loss of time."

He thought that, in the nature of the case, there was nothing very difficult or inconvenient that she could demand; but he had counted too much on the artificial and too little upon the natural and primitive woman.

Her face still hidden, she felt the full force of his appeal, but the tempest had its wild will of her. She believed him guilty; she believed him innocent. She believed that, if he were guilty, temptation had come from the woman; she believed that, if he were innocent, there was nevertheless something—she did not know what—that he was hiding from her. Faith was ready to destroy much, but would not jealousy destroy more? Her jealousy had consumed dignity, it had ravaged custom, it was burning restraint.

Mary's words had drawn in Marian's mind a concrete picture, and the contemplation of that picture



had awakened an anger in which her genuine love had for the first time genuinely expressed itself. Before, she could have heard with light regret of Dyker's engagement to marry another woman. Before, she might herself have drifted with him through a placid wooing into the port of marriage that, until this revelation, she had in no wise understood. But now she saw things specifically, and in the element of the specific the quality that she had known as "womanliness" was dissolved and the thing that she at last knew to be Woman was evolved.

The issue, she was thus still determined, depended upon proof of innocence. He must be clean, and she must know it.

She uncovered her fine face, strangely stronger for its grief.

"Wesley," she said, "I do remember all that you told me these women and this work would do to me. If you prove to be wrong, I shall stay on here, and, of course, never see you again; but if you prove to be right I shall give it up, and then, Wesley, I shall marry you."

He rose with a glad cry; but she, rising also, waved him back.

"Not yet," she said. "Either find Mary Morton and the proofs that she is dishonest—not only what I know she is, but dishonest in what she would say and do—show me this, or else——"

With straining resolution, he confronted her.

"Or else?" he prompted.

"Or else bring her to me with her own denial and explanation."

XXV

DAUGHTERS OF ISHMAEL

WHEN Mary left Rivington Street she faced the inevitable. She had seen the impossibility of domestic service; she knew nothing of any other trade; she could not endure the shame of an institution, and her fortune consisted of just fourteen dollars and fifty cents.

She walked, for a long time, aimlessly. The night thickened and, block by block, the streets flashed into electric illumination, each separate flame glowing like a malevolent eye to show her misery. Her strength, never yet fully restored, failed her. Her feet were tired, her knees bent irregularly, her head ached. As at her first sight of it, the city, which she knew scarcely better than on that spring evening when she had been tossed into it, was a conscious prison implacably shutting her in forever.

She walked westward, and then northward. She dodged across Fifth Avenue among the automobiles of careless, comfortable people on their ways to one place or another of swift enjoyment. She passed a notorious café at the warm windows of which she saw, seated at laden tables and opposite leering men, the painted faces of softly gowned women, the more successful examples of what she soon must be. And she came to hurrying Broadway through whose crowds she saw silently and cunningly darting, with



smiling hate written on their tired, rouged lips, the girls whose dawn was the lighting of the street-lamps and from whom she wanted to ask for instruction in the one means of livelihood that remained to her.

Her soul was as weakened and vitiated as her body, and by much the same forces. Into her escape from Rose's, into her work at Mrs. Turner's, into her appeal to the employment-agency and her tasks at Mrs. Chamberlin's she had put every particle of strength that she could harness, and the result had always been failure. The social system was too mighty. She could not prevail against it. She must do its bidding, and since it was so impractically constituted as to bid her prey upon it, her sole solace must be found in preying fiercely.

She turned into a cross-street, full of refulgent drinking-places that beckoned by swinging doors, behind which were the voices of singers and through which passed, in alone and out with shame-faced men, unending streams of women with white faces and vermillion mouths and sadly encircled eyes. But Mary pressed westward, though she did not clearly know her intention until, having crossed two avenues, she found that the cafés gave place to small shops, and that the shops were giving place to tall, moldy buildings with long stairways before them, houses that had once, plainly, made homes, but that were now, as plainly, barracks for lodgers.

From one of these she saw come a slight girl under a huge hat heavy with two great plumes. Mary waited until this girl drew near, first hesitated when she observed that the girl was scarcely fifteen, then spoke when she noted the bedizened dress and the

face of which the childish beauty had been trained to maturity and hardness.

"Can you tell me if I can get a room around here?" she inquired.

The girl's knowing eyes studied her.

"Hello!" she said. "When did you hit the road?"

"To-day. I want to find a room."

"Well, you can't go wrong. The house I live in is full-up; but you can ring 'most any bell along here and get what you want. There ain't no choice. One's as bum as another."

She nodded saucily and went on her way, and Mary climbed the steps of the first house she came to.

Her ring was answered by a woman that appeared, as far as Mary could observe in the faint light, to be about sixty years old. Her hair was gray and severely arranged; her dress was shabby, and she looked very tired. To Mary she did not seem to be at all the type that would conduct the sort of place which the wanderer just then needed.

"Can you rent me a room?" she nevertheless inquired.

"With privileges?" asked the woman.

It was a phrase new to its hearer, but she understood that it described the kind of room she wanted.

"Yes," she almost whispered.

But the woman did not lower her voice. Her descent, as Mary afterwards learned, had been by slow stages, and her complaisance had been enforced through a history that began with the establishment of a respectable boarding-house, when a reform-election had driven her husband from the police-force,



passed through a widowhood imposed upon by absconding lodgers and raised house-rents, and ended by the admission of first one and then many patrons that were, though they wanted what she had not always cared to give, at least certain to pay what she had to turn over to the church-corporation that owned the property.

"I got a nice second-floor front, just a step from the bath-room, at eighteen dollars," she said.

"A month?" inquired Mary.

The woman regarded her as if she were somewhat of a curiosity.

"Certainly not: eighteen a week."

"Oh, I—I couldn't afford that."

"It's a nice room."

"Yes, I guess it is, but——"

"I might let it to you for fifteen, to start with."

"I couldn't afford it."

"Well, there's the parlor. It's only twelve, an'll be vacant to-morrow."

"I'm afraid I'll have to get a place for to-night. Haven't you anything cheaper?"

"You don't seem to know nothin' about prices, miss." The landlady appeared to reflect. "But there's the third-floor back hall-room," she added; "I can let you have it for seven, an' better than that you can't do anywheres."

Mary hesitated.

"You can easy make three times that much," the woman urged.

"Do you——" Mary wet her dry lips. "Do you think so?"

"Think so? Why, the lady that had that room

for a whole year till last week made as high as twenty dollars a night. She moved out o' here to her own flat. But then, she was good-looking, of course."

Mary had entertained some vague notion of a small gas-stove, and some saving in the matter of meals; but this the landlady could in no wise permit.

"The insurance sharks won't allow it," she said, and concluded in a tone that showed the later fact to be of more importance: "Besides, it so runs up the gas-bills."

Mary said no more. She paid for a week in advance, and was shown at once to the cell she had leased so dearly.

It was a little, gaudily-papered room scarcely fifteen feet long and not much more than two-thirds that in width. A stationary washstand was so placed that the door could not open freely. At the single narrow window stood an unsteady table of no apparent purpose, and along the side a clothes-press and a narrow, pine bureau. The bed, however, was the chief feature of furniture, and that was large and comfortable.

"I'll give you clean sheets every Sunday morning regular," said the landlady; "but any changes you want between you'll have to pay for the washin' of."

She demanded, and received, twenty-five cents for a latch-key, added that she permitted no noise in the rooms, and departed, leaving Mary sitting on the edge of the bed.

The girl's experiences in the house of Rose Légère had prepared her but imperfectly for this adventure.



It was a new business, and Mary did not know how to embark upon it. She was as lost as the chorus-girl, unused to the purchase of railway tickets and the engaging of "hotel-accommodations," who finds herself stranded in a small town.

She went to the bureau and looked at herself in its distorting mirror, in an effort to appraise her wares. Her hollow cheeks needed rouge. Her dull eyes needed belladonna. Her clothes were worn. She felt that she should start work immediately, but she was afraid. She went to bed and slept.

By the next evening she had spent all but a dollar and some few cents of the seven dollars and a quarter that had remained to her. With her bundles under her aching arm, she was returning to her lodging-house to prepare for work, when she stopped at the "Ladies' Entrance" of the corner-saloon and, going into a bare apartment for a drink of whiskey, found, seated at a table, as the only other customer, the girl of whom she had asked her questions on the night before.

The child smiled as pleasantly as her hardened face would permit.

"Hello, kid," she said. "How's tricks?"

"Hello," replied Mary.

"Sit down here," said the girl.

Mary accepted her invitation, and gave the grinning waiter her order.

"Got settled?" asked the girl, when the waiter had come and gone again.

"Yes," replied Mary, "I got a room."

"Where?"

"The fifth door from here."

The girl whistled. She was proud of her knowledge.

"That old cat Charlotte Michaels!" she commented. "I bet she stuck you."

"She charges me seven dollars a week for a third-floor back hall-bedroom."

"Hell, that's a steal. Come next door to where I am, next week. There'll be a better room there, then, for a dollar less."

Mary looked at the child. It seemed strange that she should be about to ask of one perhaps two years her junior for directions in the ways of the street; but she saw that the childishness before her was childishness without innocence, was even lined and scarred by wisdom. She wondered about her own face.

"I'm goin' to start out to-night," she said.

In the etiquette of this trade the workers ask no questions of one another and offer few biographies save those fictitious ones, the threadbare, unimaginative lies, which they reserve for their inquisitive purchasers. Mary's entertainer, therefore, put forward no inquiries save one:

"New in this town?" she asked.

"I'm new in the business," said Mary.

The child eyed her doubtingly.

"Come off," she good-naturedly replied.

"Yes, I am. I was in a house onc't, but I'm new to this, an' I ain't just sure how to go about it."

"Oh," said the child, "it's dead easy to learn the curves, but it's the hardest job in the world. Can't your fellow put you wise?"

"My fellow?"



"Sure, your fellow, your friend, your sweetheart. Honest, now; ain't you workin' for nobody?"

"No."

"Well, you ought to be. Most all the girls is. You can't get along right without one. Who's goin' to go your bail when you're pinched?"

"Will I be pinched?"

"About as often as onc't a month, kid—unless you let the cop call onc't a week."

"I guess I can stand him," said Mary. She was past the stage of objections.

"You'll have to pay him anyhow, you know."

"I thought I might have to."

"Then you thought dead right. Why don't you get a fellow? They's lots of them. They got political pulls. Of course, they don't leave you much money for yourself, but they certainly can fix things up for you."

"Have you a fellow?" asked Mary.

"I sure have," said the child, grandly. "My girl friend an' I have had one between us ever since we left school last June."

"Does he treat you right?"

"As good as any. He beats us up once in a while when we don't earn enough, or when he's more than usual lit up. But he keeps the cops away, an' he gets us good trade, an' he's true to the two of us. He'd ought to be; we make good money for him."

Mary listened in a kind of awe.

"You like him?" she asked.

"I love him," the child emphatically declared. "Lots of the girls hates their fellows, but daren't leave 'em because their fellows'd have 'em pinched

right off—but I love mine. You ought to get one. I'll put you next."

"No," said Mary, "I think I'll wait; but I wish I knew the curves."

"Oh, hell; it's dead easy, I tell you." The child gulped her whiskey and went on: "You just put on your glad rags at eight o'clock an' walk Broadway from Twenty-third to Forty-second. If you can hustle, you can land half a dozen before one o'clock. When they give you the glad eye, take it, an' when they don't, just you walk by 'em sort of hummin' under your breath. Stop an' look in the store-windows, an' they'll come like flies. But always be sure to get your money first. Ask 'em two dollars if they look that strong, or one if they're cheap guys—but don't ever take a cent less'n fifty cents. I always gets the two-plunk myself, unless a piker stands out for a dark corner or hallway and tries the quarter game: then I go through his clothes for all he's got."

Mary rose, with averted eyes.

"Thank you," she said.

"Oh, that's all right," said the child. "You just take my tip, an' you'll make good."

And, if by managing, by the most detestible sort of work, to keep clothes upon her back, food in her stomach and a roof over her head, was making good, Mary did it. Everything fell out as the little girl had described. That night the adventurer, with no alternative, sank the last of her scruples, and, when her room-rent next fell due, she paid it and had a margin of several dollars to place in her stocking.

There was not, she found, very much to be saved,



for the whole world seemed to mark her as legitimate prey.

First, the policemen were quick to see that she was an unprotected newcomer, and, one by one, to stop her and threaten her with arrest. In the beginning, she was afraid to slip them their tithes, and did it timidly and awkwardly; but, when she saw how jauntily and graciously they accepted payment, she had the bills always ready at the time when they were expected and, with the bills, the caresses that, not infrequently, had to accompany them.

Other expenses were proportionate. Rent gained upon the advance of prosperity. Showy clothes, if not the best, were a necessity, and the second-hand shops raised their prices on the suspicion of her profession. Rainy nights came, when there was almost no business to be done. The work was of a character that required sturdy food, and this must be bought in restaurants tacitly conducted for her class and charging accordingly. The men, she soon discovered, were as loath to buy her a supper as they were ready to buy her drinks, a condition the sole consolation of which was the fact that alcohol dulled whatever remained of the fine edge of sensibility.

Some of her cursory Antonies, regarding their transactions as they regarded their other business affairs, were honest, but most were honest only when they had to be, and to them Mary and her kind were beasts of burden not worthy of the stipulated hire. There were the lechers that wanted only to waste the busy minutes in unremunerative talk; there were the seekers that endeavored to secure through hideous formulæ of affection what they were too

mean frankly to purchase; there were the hypocritical male animals that, above suspicion in their daylight life, considered the women of the night as fair game for cheating, and then there were the careful toads, who prided themselves upon their shrewdness, and who bargained and haggled as a man would be ashamed to bargain and haggle for a dog.

It was a trade of hard hours, hard walking, and hard drinking, and, in the glaring cafés where she often sat with her fellow-workers waiting to be smiled at by the hunters, Mary, though she met many girls that fared worse than herself, met few that, when truthful, told of faring better. The woman that quitted her landlady's care for "a flat of her own" represented the ideal toward which this whole army was hoping, but was an ideal mythical.

Nearly all were working in health and out, and saving nothing. Nearly all were in bondage to task-masters that slunk along after them through the streets, saw them strike a bargain, waited in the shadows of a nearby house until the wage was paid, and then came forward, before the customer had turned the corner, to exact their tribute. Born, through the effects of a wasteful industrial system, in cellars upon beds of rags, herded as children in attics where a family of ten slept in a space too small for five, bred in poverty, always underfed and never properly protected from the weather, some of them were used to hardship that no decent social justice would ever have permitted. Others had been lured from comfortable homes. Still others were the faster fettered because they had gone from homes too respectable to allow of any return. But almost every-



one, through fear of exposure, dread of jail and reformatory, and awe of their owners' political influences, was the chattel of a slavery as thorough as that of which Max Crossman was a minor instrument.

The majority of these toilers were ready to receive, or had long since received, the seeds of tuberculosis; few could continue their work for five years, and ninety-five per cent., as a drunken young college undergraduate one evening cheerfully informed Mary, were suffering from one or other, and sometimes from all three, of the trio of diseases common to their business. Out from those stuffy bedrooms and those smoke-clouded, song-filled cafés, men carried the scourging social illnesses to innocent wives and to unborn children destined to dwarfed or sightless lives. The sufferer might believe himself cured and bear infection years later.

"Now, take yourself, for instance," the lad had resumed, his cheeks still rosy with youth, but his eyes aflame with liquor. "I know something about these things; but I couldn't tell whether you were free or not. You might be sick a long time before even you could tell, and then you wouldn't risk starvation by telling about it. You might be sick right now for all I know. But look out for the worst of all!"

Mary heard him with as little heed as she had heard most men. She had learned all that he said from women who knew more of it than, she hoped, this boy would ever know, and she had been well assured that it was a danger that no preventive could wholly defy and no care be certain to escape.

After all, she used to reflect, nothing much mattered. She had nothing pleasant to look forward to and, therefore, she wisely refrained, save for one advancing idea, from looking forward. She had no past that did not have its pain for her vision, and, therefore, with this sole exception, she resolutely kept her eyes upon the present day.

Yet gradually one great passion was growing within her. That process of thought which had begun in her encounter with Philip Beekman, when she left his mother's employment, had been hastened in its growth by what Marian Lennox had said and failed to do, and the shock of the girl's embarkation upon her new profession had only momentarily retarded it. She was not large enough—few of us are—to see the conditions behind the individual, nor yet greatly to concern herself with individuals that did not directly concern her; but she saw clearly her own plight, and now saw, or thought she saw, that this plight was due entirely to the machinations of the man who had taken her from her home and brought her to New York. She could have loved him, and so she hated him; she could still feel a tenderness for what he might have been, so she permitted herself to feel only animosity for what he had proved himself to be. To him she traced directly all that had befallen her, and as she could not go beyond him, so from him, she slowly and finally resolved, she would exact payment. That thought waxed in her tired mind; it was fed with every throe of her pained body until it dominated her circumscribed outlook upon the world. It even saved her from suffering, because it so possessed her



that it armored her against all lesser things. She had found, at last, a purpose in life.

It was almost coincident with her realization of this that Mary realized something else. She went immediately to a physician.

Dr. Helwig, a man with an enormous paunch and a round face and triple chin, was one of the many excellent practitioners that depend for their living —and it is a good one—upon the class to which Mary belonged. He treated the matter for what it was: a commonplace in his day's work. At the end of a week he confirmed her fears.

For a moment she reeled under the blow. The bookcases with their ponderous volumes in dark bindings, the shelves burdened with phials, the glass medicine-case, the convertible table for minor operations, the crowded desk, and even the fat physician before it, seemed to whirl in a mad saraband.

"Come, come!" she heard the doctor say, as he thrust an uncorked bottle of smelling-salts under her nose.

"How long will it last?" she panted.

"We must keep up our treatment for six months or a year," he answered. "Meantime, diet and quiet. No liquor. If you were a millionaire, I'd prescribe a long sea-voyage or a trip to Hot Springs."

Out of the chaos of her brain a sudden idea was shaping.

"What," she inquired, "about other people catching this?"

He knew her business perfectly, and he knew that what he had to say on this point would weigh but

little in the scale against want. Nevertheless, he made the common answer.

After that she listened to all the instructions that he gave her. More than ever now she had her purpose in life.



XXVI

"THE LEAST OF THESE"

A WEEK later, in a lamp-lighted street, Mary and Carrie met. Each girl was too conscious of her own business to remark that it was the business of her acquaintance, and each tried to avoid the other; but before recognition was complete they were face to face. Silence was confession. Mary spoke.

"Hello," she said, "it's a long time since I seen you. How are you, anyways?"

Carrie, though still a homely girl, wore a close-fitting coat that made the best of her figure. Her hat was wide and new and, as she answered, she turned from the light.

"Pretty well," she said, and paused short.

"I guess," said Mary, "you thought it was queer, my never comin' to see you; but I haven't had a single chance. I'll come soon, honest I will. How's Katie?"

"I don't know," Carrie slowly answered, "I'm not living with her any more."

"You ain't? Since when ain't you?"

"Oh, I don't know—a couple of weeks."

"You two didn't scrap?"

"No. I had to go away." And then, to divert the fire, Carrie added: "Are you still working at that place the Settlement-people got for you?"

"No, I left that long ago. Have you gone back to the shirtwaist-factory?"

"I couldn't: the strike was never settled, and, anyhow, they wouldn't have taken me back if I'd been willing to go."

Mary looked at the long coat and the gray hat.

"But, say," she began, "you don't look——"

Her eyes dropped to Carrie's and, suddenly, she knew. Her voice softened.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I had to do it, too."

Silently they touched hands. The Lithuanian's breast rose and fell quickly.

"I couldn't do anything else," said Carrie, but only in explanation, not in extenuation or excuse. "There was no other work I could do."

"I know," said Mary.

"And everywhere I went," continued Carrie, "he followed me. He was always just behind me when I walked, always just around the corner when I stood still. When I was dizzy and hungry, he always looked well fed and always had the money in his hand. He waited, waited, waited."

"You mean your fellow?" Mary asked.

Carrie assented. "If you can call him that," she said. "He has two or three others working for him, or he'd be across the street now. I'm different from them—freer. I'm not afraid of him, and so he is a little afraid of me."

Mary took the girl's arm.

"They won't let us stop this way on the pavement," she said. "Come in here and have a drink."

They went into the women's room of one of the quieter saloons. Mary, mindful of the doctor's direc-



tions, took only carbonated water, but Carrie ordered whiskey.

Mary, with her stomach crying out for the alcohol, and, in that wrenching desire, nearly seizing her companion's liquor, sipped the water.

"I've quit it," she averred. "It don't pay."

"Most of the men make you take it," said Carrie.

"Yes," Mary admitted, "but you can chuck it on the floor if you're fly." She took another sip of the water, and then asked: "Why don't you shake this man if you're not scared of him. You can come with me, you know."

"It wouldn't be good business," Carrie declared. "I need somebody with influence to look after me in case I'm arrested."

Mary was silent for a minute, thinking.

"Perhaps you're right," she granted; "there's one of 'em I'd like to find."

"Who is it?"

"I'll tell you sometime.—Look here: I don't feel like workin' Broadway to-night, an' I've got some money. Let's do a dance-hall."

They "did" several. At the first a mask-ball was in progress; the bachanalian guests had rented extravagant costumes; confetti was tossed by the onlookers, and swiftly shifting lights of red and blue, of green and purple, played upon the dancers, whose whirling shadows, monstrously magnified, were thrown upon sheeted walls. At another, there was an explosion of obscene epithets followed by a fight, which made retreat advisable; and at a third, the dances were so short and the intervals provided for

the solicitations of the waiters were so long that both girls wearied of the scene.

On Tenth Avenue they at last found, however, a place more to their liking. It was the usual type of room, enlarged by tearing out the thin partitions that had once divided it into several tenements. The lights shone sick through the clouding smoke, and the air was heavy with the odors of dust, tobacco, alcohol, and sweat. But the music was lively, the floor crowded, and the little tables along the walls were surrounded by laughing groups of drinking men and women. Of the former, though most were hollow-chested, pale-cheeked, hawk-nosed, some showed clearly that they came to plunder; and if the majority of the latter were gum-chewing working-girls still in their earliest teens, many were of the variety to which the two newcomers now belonged.

Mary and her companion sat down at a table near the door. They nodded to the burly, cigar-smoking "Boss," who moved energetically about, urging bloodless lads to find partners, and now and then himself taking a turn with a neglected girl. They exchanged familiar greetings, though they had never before seen her, with the false-jeweled woman whose business it was to assist the boss in stimulating the dancers by precept and example. And they watched the scene with a gaze grave and calculating.

Here a child of thirteen, with closed eyes and her peach-tinted cheek against her pimpled partner's, undulated to the music, scarcely moving her feet. Nearby there whirled, like a dervish, a girl to whose consumptive face the revolutions brought a glow that mimicked health. Now and then a woman



would leap from one of the tables, embrace an unembarrassed man about the neck and so waltz off with him, at once passionate and mocking, both of them deaf to the plaudits of their spectators. From time to time the lights were suddenly extinguished, and the dance went on in the darkness amid a chorus of kisses, cries, and giggling. Most of the boys and men, and nearly all of the little girls, were drunk.

Among the dancers, doubtless plying his trade, Mary saw Rafael Angelelli, sleek and radiant in a new suit of pale buff. He detected her a little later and, disposing of a pure-faced child, who had been in his arms, made a skillful way to his old acquaintance. He shook Mary's reluctant hand and, nodding to Carrie as if she were a familiar friend, sat down between the two women.

"Where you been?" he affably inquired of Mary.

"Out of town," said Mary, coldly.

Angel shrugged his shoulders. He knew she lied, but he rarely contradicted a lady.

"Meester Dyk' been lookin' all over theesa town for you, Violet," he said.

Mary did not like the news. She was still afraid that she might be wanted in connection with her contradictory affidavits.

Angel, however, readily reassured her. Just what Dyker wanted he did not, he said, know; but he was certain that it was something for her benefit. The magistrate had commissioned him to find her, and Angel had been searching, sporadically, for several weeks, even tracing her course back to the employment-agency and to that Mrs. Turner's where she *had first* worked.

"Theesa woman say you steal," said the Italian.

"She's a liar," answered Mary, hotly.

"She say she tol' you so."

"She tried to make out I took a cake of soap."

"But she say after you leave she meess two dollar an' some silka stockin'."

"That woman never wore no silk stockin's in her life, an' there wasn't two dollars in the house."

Again the Italian shrugged his shoulders. He gave Mary to understand that, in his opinion, any woman who could steal and did not was a fool, and that any woman who stole and acknowledged it was a worse fool. But what, plainly, most interested him was the execution of his commission from Dyker. He talked so earnestly about it that he failed entirely to lay Mary's fears. She refused to give him her address, and as soon as he had left the table she endeavored to quit the hall.

The entrance of an acquaintance detained her. There were words that had to be said and drinks that had to be bought. Half an hour passed, and then, as she started with Carrie for the door, Mary saw Wesley Dyker standing outside. He was wrapped in a heavy overcoat with its military collar turned up about his chin and his black derby pulled far over his eyes; but Mary feared him too much to fail of recognition.

"There he is!" she whispered, catching her companion's arm. "The Dago telephoned him. I was afraid of that."

Escape was hopeless. She sent Carrie back to the dancers, and, going out, met Dyker, her head erect.



"I heard you was lookin' for me," she said.

Wesley raised his hat.

"Yes," he said dryly; "walk a block or two with me."

They went for some time in silence, Mary too much upon the defensive to risk beginning a conversation, and Dyker trying in vain to command the anger that had been growing with every day since he had learned how she had betrayed him to Marian. At the first dark street into which he turned her, his resentment burst its guard.

"What in hell do you mean by telling everybody all you know about me?" he demanded.

Mary shrank away.

"No, you don't!" he said, and seized her hand. "Didn't I do you the best turn that was ever done you?"

"Yes," the woman quavered. "An' I wouldn't pay you back the way you say I done. I never talked about you to nobody."

"Don't lie. You know you did."

Mary remembered, but she shook her head determinedly.

"I've never once spoke your name," she said.

"I tell you to stop lying!" rejoined Dyker. "You told it once at the Settlement on Rivington Street. I know it. I learned it there myself."

"What did I tell?" asked Mary. Her tone was defiant, but her endeavor was to draw his fire.

They walked forward.

"You said I hung out at Rose's," he protested. "You said I was her lover and yours."

"*I never* said I had nothing to do with you, Mr.

Dyker. I don't care who told you I did; I never said no such thing."

"You said I went to Rose's. I know you did."

She confessed to that, for she was truly sorry for it.

"But I didn't mean to, Mr. Dyker," she added; "honest, I didn't. It just slipped out. I didn't know Miss Marian knowed you. Why, she told me she didn't know you, an' how'd I ever think she'd lie?"

That was a question which, ignorant of Miss Lennox's precise method of evasion, Wesley did not, even to himself, attempt to answer.

"It didn't matter whether she knew me or not," he said; "you had no right to tell it."

"I know that. It just slipped out. But it won't never happen again. I wasn't so wise as I am now."

"I hope not," he said, a trifle mollified by the sincerity in her tone. "But you've done me a big amount of harm there, Violet, and you have got to undo it."

Her first sensation had been one of relief in finding that her false affidavit was not held against her; her next had been fright at his anger; but now she was all penitence for the ill she had wrought him. Dyker was the one man in New York that had done her a kindness, and she held that kindness as the greatest possible.

"What do you want?" she asked. "I'd do most anything for you, Mr. Dyker: you know that."

They were under the uncertain light of a crossing. He eyed her narrowly, mistrustingly.



"I want you," he replied, "to come to my office to-morrow evening at six. Here's my card. Will you do it?"

She took the card and thrust it through the opening of her shirtwaist.

"What do you want with me when you get me there?" she wondered.

"I want you to come with me to Miss Lennox, and deny the story that you told her about me."

Mary's heart sank. She could not bear the thought of facing Marian.

"What's the use o' that?" she pleaded.

"What's the use? Why, how else are you going to put me right with her?"

"But I couldn't."

"You must."

"I couldn't, Mr. Dyker. Honest, I couldn't. She'd know I was lyin' to her."

p[illegible]. You leave that to me."

about you to [illegible]se'd I give her?"

"Don't lie. [illegible]p to-morrow."

Mary remembered, [illegible] me do it, Mr. Dyker!"

minedly. [illegible]se can I do?—It's all your

"I've never once spoke [illegible]dress?"

"I tell you to stop lyi[illegible]ously.

"You told it once at the Set[illegible] have a cab there for

Street. I know it. I learned [illegible]

"What did I tell?" asked M[illegible]ed sobs.

defiant, but her endeavor was to [illegible]ed, "please don't

They walked forward. [illegible], 'most, under the

"You said I hung out at Ros[illegible]s Marian—honest

"You said I was her lover and y[illegible]

"I never said I had nothing t[illegible]s to play upon her

gratitude, but what he did do was again to allow his mistrust and anger to have their rein.

"I won't have any nonsense about this, Violet," he said. "If you don't come to my office to-morrow at six, I'll have you arrested—and I'll see to it that you won't escape with a mere fine, either."

"It won't——" She could not grasp it. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean I'll have you arrested on a big charge."

Her lips stiffened with that common terror of the law, about the only terror that the law ever succeeds nowadays in creating: the unreasoning terror that seldom serves as a deterrent.

"I ain't done nothin' but this," she said, in the full knowledge that what she had or had not done would be no factor in the problem.

"You'll find out about that when the time comes," he answered. "What I want to know is whether you'll do me this favor or not."

He had stopped and confronted her. Even in the semi-darkness her anxious eyes managed to read his pale, determined face, but even in the daylight they could have found there no relenting.

She gave him a despairing smile.

"I guess I've got to," she said.

"Yes, you'll have to."

"All right."

"You'll do it?"

"I'll do it, all right."

"No bluff?"

"No."

"Remember: if you don't, I'll fix you."



Mary turned away.

"I'll not forget," she said.

"If you don't," he called after her, "you won't be sorry."

"I won't forget," she repeated.

And yet, even as she walked away from him, the sickness of indecision was upon her. Like all narrow experiences, her narrow experience made her afraid of everything beyond its own limits. Her habit of life was the habit of the weakened bird of prey that attacks only the defenseless and flies before the strong. She had become a moral coward, and the progress of her physical disease directly accentuated the insidious encroachments of her moral illness. She could not openly face Marian; she did not dare openly to defy Dyker. She wanted only to run away.

By four o'clock the next afternoon she had run away. The night had been a wearisome journey backward and forward between the decision to obey the magistrate and the decision to evade him. She thought that she owed him much, but she knew that she could not successfully face Marian and lie. She was tremblingly afraid of Wesley's vengeance, but she was more afraid of Marian's honest eyes. All day she lay upon her bed, dizzy from this circling process of thought, but at last, in an attack of dread of the lie more severe than any that had preceded it, she flung her clothes into a little trunk, which she had recently purchased, and, calling a cab, drove to a new lodging-house.

She did not go out that evening, but the next she *had to go,* and she had not been on Broadway for

two hours before a plain-clothes man touched her arm.

"I'm sorry, kid," he said, "but you've got to come along with me."

Instinctively she recoiled, but the detective's fingers had slipped to her wrist and tightened on it. The sword had fallen.

"Where to?" she asked.

She knew the man. She had given him money, and more than money, yet she expected no mercy, expected nothing but an explanation.

"Jefferson Market," said her captor. "But if you've got anybody handy who'll go your bail, I'll take you to see him first, before we go down to Ninth Street."

Mary shook her head. Helpless horror had her for its own.

"No use," she answered.

"Are you sure?" he asked.

"Certain sure," she said, and then, a little wistfully: "I guess there ain't no good in tryin' to talk business to you?"

The detective was a big, black-mustached man. His face was not unkindly, but he was helpless.

"No," he said; "this here's orders from the front. If you haven't got some fellow to be ready with bail, I guess we'd better hurry up."

They crossed to Sixth Avenue and walked down that noisy thoroughfare to the towering brick fortress that stands like a castle to guard the gateway of old Greenwich Village.

By day that somber building seems to hide behind the grim planks of the elevated railroad; it is ugly,



neglected, innocent; under its protecting wings are the stalls of white-aproned butchers and the open establishments of green-grocers and hucksters plying their several occupations. But no sooner does the darkness drop its curtain over the webbed streets, the dirty courts, and the foul alleys that surround the place, than Jefferson Market ceases to be a building for the dispensation of food and becomes a court for the dispensation of the commodity that we carelessly label Justice. The hands of the large clock in the high tower are hurried toward the hour of twelve; long rays of sinister light are shot from windows narrow and barred; and under a vaulted entrance-way there pours, from year's end to year's end, an unending army of those women of the street who have lost, for one reason or another, their ability any longer to purchase the protection of the Law.

It is not often that what the statutes designate as crime comes to the Night Court: Crime may wait for the morning. It is the drunkard, the vagrant, the licenseless pedlar, and, above all, unfriended Maria Peripatetica, the human being that humanity has spoiled in the making, who is taken there. Above all, the Mariæ Peripateticæ that have, once fostered by the Law, quarreled with it, failed to bribe it, or openly rebelled against it. Black and white, short-skirted and gray-haired, besilked and bedraggled, from nine in the evening until early morning, five thousand in a twelvemonth, they are brought to the Jefferson Market Court for judgment from the power that has made them what they are.

And judgment is what they receive. The law is a mill that was made to grind out one thing, and

can grind no other; the courts were constituted to make criminals and to punish them, not to prevent or to cure; our present justice is not mercy; it is formulæ, not sentiment. There is one woman that has some small authority in this tribunal, one woman that sees an occasional girl with some promise in her face and takes her away to Waverley House for observation and to be given, if all goes well, a chance at other employment; but Waverley House is small, it is poor, and there is small chance for her that has been twice stricken. One woman cannot do much against the grinding mill, and the grinding mill, between January and December, sends only seventeen girls to a semi-sane reformatory as compared to three thousand that it sends to the university of crime which is known as "The Island."

Mary was hurried up a short flight of stone steps and into a small hallway. A metal gate was opened for her and snapped shut as she passed it. A stocky man took her name and address and got, from her conductor, in a voice that she could not hear, the charge on which she had been arrested, and then, after one turn to the left and another to the right, she was shoved through a door and into a brightly-lighted, heavily-barred detention-pen.

Dazedly, she looked about. Beside her, upon one side, sat a gray-haired woman of sixty, too old any longer to earn that tribute which would have secured her immunity for the prosecution of the trade she must recently have adopted. Nearby was a girl of thirteen, who, temporarily neglected by her owner, had been arrested for the same offense. On the bench sat a fat negress who informed all listeners



that she was falsely charged with picking the pocket of a bald-headed white man that she had solicited. Over them all streamed the pitiless light of strong lamps, upon them all were soon to feast the eyes of the crowd in the near court-room.

The newcomer bowed her head. She did not know that a court-retainer had been waiting her arrival. She did not know that, as soon as she had entered, this retainer had hurried to a telephone. She did not know that, in answer to this call, Rafael Angelelli had hurried to the door that she had just passed, and there presented a note bearing a potent signature. She did not even know that these things were of common enough occurrence, and she was aware of only her misery until she heard the Italian's low voice and saw him beckoning her to the bars.

She almost ran toward him. The other prisoners gathered about her, but the officer that accompanied Angel waved them away, and himself drew back. Mary clutched the bars as if they had been a tangible hope.

"Angel!" she whispered.

But Angelelli fronted her, scowling. He shook a tight fist under her shrinking eyes.

"You are a dam' fool!" he answered.

Mary could not articulate. Her lips involuntarily found an unthought query, but her voice was dumb.

"Why you not leesten to theesa Wesley Dyk'?" pursued Rafael. "Now maybe you go to the Island. You know what that mean? Theesa jailers cut off your hair, beat you up every mornin', every evenin' regular. No meals; only bread an' water; no whees-*key.* An' when you come out every cop hava you'

peecture an' you get arrest' each time an' senta back again to jail!"

She believed him. She would have believed anything that was said to her by someone she had previously known. With a flow of ready tears that blinded her sunken eyes, she begged him to tell her of some way of escape.

Angel was ready with his answer. It seemed that he still represented Wesley Dyker and that Mr. Dyker was not disposed to be so hard on her as impartial justice demanded that he should be. In the back-room of a nearby saloon there were a lawyer and a notary in waiting. If Mary would promise to swear to and sign before them a prepared paper denying the accusations she had made to Marian, Angel would now, by means of a second note, see that the sitting magistrate did but fine her, and would hand her at once the amount of that fine.

She had supposed that her arrest had been on the charge of larceny from Mrs. Turner's boarding-house; she had not known that she was accused of no more than the practice of her trade, and she could scarcely credit news so good as this which Angel brought her.

"An' I won't have to go to Miss Marian?" she asked.

"No. Meest' Dyk' want thees paper for hees girl—jus' to square heemself witha hees girl—no more. You go where you want."

"An' the judge'll let me off?"

"Right away."

She promised, and a moment later was led into the court-room.



She saw the gaping, leering crowd, which filled half of that apartment beyond the low grating. She saw the stolid policemen herding their charges as stockyard hands herd cattle for the slaughter. She saw the stealthy slavers buzzing in and out, bent upon nefarious rescue; the waiting lawyers on the outer bench and the laughing lawyers inside, joking together or making mirth before the desk at which, in his black robe, sat the weary, cynical, indifferent magistrate, his face as expressionless as that of a Chinese Joss. She heard, between the roars of elevated trains, the unintelligible oaths, administered, as she now understood that the average oath is administered, with a rapidity that robbed them of all dignity and most effect; the drone of testimony constantly interrupted to the point of confusion and always curtailed to the exclusion of essential truth; the mechanical pronouncement of sentence that ended, as if the two things were on phrase, in the summoning of the succeeding case. All this she saw and heard and disregarded. She had been struck down, trapped, held fast in the grip of the invisible enemy that she thought of as the City. She had been conscious of nothing but the living Fear, and now, Angel had told her, some portion of relief was at hand.

Her arraignment, the payment of her fine, her meeting with the waiting Italian, her progress to the nearby saloon where the lawyer and the notary were ready for her—all this passed like a vision of the night. She signed without reading it—though she would not have understood it if she had read it—the formal denial to which her affirmation was *immediately* affixed. She was too dazed to think

until, leaving the three smiling men behind her, she had turned again into free Sixth Avenue.

It was then that she saw coming toward her a young man—a young man that might have been anywhere from nineteen to thirty-two—with hair that was dark and curly, sorely-shaven olive cheeks just showing the defeated tokens of a blue-black beard; a dapper, prosperous young man, with thick lips and hard eyes and a smartly cut overcoat, from one pocket of which flashed a brilliant-bordered handkerchief.

In the instant Mary's exhaustion dropped from her brain and shoulders. She forgot her fright of the earlier evening; she remembered only the sufferings from which it had arisen. Her waiting had not, after all, been vain. She was calm, she was resourceful, she was resolved.

"Hello, Max," she said.



XXVII

JUDGMENT

AT first he did not know her. He stood there, while their eyes were locked, in his own eyes no gleam of honest memory. He was unchanged—the serene, the secure, the smug Max Crossman of that first meeting in the street of her little Pennsylvania town; but she, as she so well knew without this silent testimony, was not now, and never again could be, the girl of that lost springtime. He looked at her, his thick lips drawn thin in a professional grimace, and not until she spoke a second time did he recognize her.

He started then, and his olive face went pale; but Mary put out her hand precisely as if she were meeting, after a brief absence, only an acquaintance of the everyday friendly sort, and Max, too glad for pardon to question motive, seized and squeezed her hand tenderly.

"What?" he cried in mock pleasure at this *contretemps*. "No, it *ain'd!* I gan't hardly belief mine eyes you're lookin' so fine. But it *is* Mary Denbigh!"

She smiled almost gayly. In little she had to lie, but in much, though for a reason that he must not suspect, she was indeed exultant.

"I am lookin' good, ain't I, Max?" she said.

He surveyed her cheap finery; saw her hair, dis-

rdered in her passage through the crowded court-
ɔom, and turned his gaze quickly from her hollow,
ainted cheeks, her hardening carmine mouth, and
ɛr heavily ringed eyes.

"You're *grand,*" he said. "I always knew you'd
ake good, Mary."

"You jollier!" she laughed, and with her free
and, patted his olive cheek.

"No, it's *hon*est, so help me."

"Then don't you want to buy me a drink, Max?"

Crossman dropped her hand. His face grew
ɔubtful.

"I vish I had *dime,*" he said, "but I god to see
friend down the Avenue, an'——"

"A lady, Max?"

"Ach, no, Mary."

"Then let him go. You ought to be glad to take
walk with as good-lookin' a girl as you say I
n."

For another fleeting instant Max let his eyes rest
ɪ her face, then lowered them. He looked at the
ɑvement and drew an awkward line upon it with
ɪe edge of his tan boot-sole. More significant than
ɪy physical change in her was the fact that she could
ɔw embarrass him.

"I know, Mary," he stammered; "but, you *see,*
ɪis here feller vhat I tol'——"

She laughed again. She thrust her arm through
ɪs and turned his face uptown.

"Forget it!" she said. "Don't you worry, Max;
ain't goin' to rake things up, if that's what's sour-
ɪg you. Life's too short. All I want is a talk and
drink."



Half reluctantly, he let her lead him; but she could lead him and that sufficed her.

He lit an American cigarette and puffed it nervously.

"I've just been in there," she said, with a backward jerk of her head in the direction of the police-court.

"There?" Max was not surprised, but he added: "What vas you doin' in there?"

"What do you think?" responded Mary. She herself was thinking rapidly—about other things.

"You vasn't in drouble?"

"I guess you would call it that."

"Pinched?"

"Yes."

He had asked her no questions about her past—but concerning her present he chanced a query.

"Mary," he inquired, "do you mean they god you up fer your beesiness?"

"That's about it," she said.

"But vhy don't you square you'self vith the goppers?"

"I don't know. I—I was broke, Max."

"I vish I gould *help* you, Mary," he said, his curiosity cooling at the thought of an appeal for assistance.

She saw it, and it amused her.

"Can't you do it?" she asked, dropping her voice into a whine.

He tried to draw away from her, but her linked arm held him affectionately fast.

"I been havin' rotten luck," he declared; "some-

hin' awful. I ain't got hardly only the money vhat's n my *glothes.*"

"Well, then," said Mary, looking at the clothes ınd knowing well that they somewhere concealed an ımple yellow sum, "why don't you take me on your ıtaff?"

"Mary," he cried, trying to spread his hands, and ailing dismally with the one that her pinioning arm ıampered, "vhat do you think I *am?* A million-ıire? I ain't got no staff."

"Come off!" she bantered.

"I ain't—honest."

"Still in the other line?" she persisted. "I hought you might be trottin' 'em on the street—hey say there's more in it. Why do you stick to ıupplyin' the flats and the houses?"

Her voice was the perfection of good nature, but ıe writhed under it.

"Mary!" he pleaded.

"Well," she said, disregarding his tone, and keeping his arm fast in her own, "you do supply 'em, lon't you? I know one fellow who makes his livin' goin' the rounds, findin' what girls is sore on their nadams an' then gettin' a commission by sneakin' em out an' changin' 'em to new flats. He lets on ıe's sellin' kimonas, but one sample's lasted him three ears."

"Mary!" repeated Max, more weakly.

"That's the truth," she said, and then: "But ;an't you start street-work an' take me on your ıtaff?"

Again he looked at her.

"No," he answered.

"Not young enough lookin' now, eh?" She was still smiling.

"Ach," he protested, "you oughtn't nod to be so *hard* on a feller. If you chust knowed——"

But she had gone far enough, and she would not let him finish. They had reached a saloon near to her new lodging-place, and she paused. There was, and she knew it, no word in his excuse that she would have credited. Nor did she mean, just yet, to let him see her hatred. In order that he might the better see it at a later moment, she wanted now to quiet his naturally ready fears. She had found that she could harass him, and that, for the present, was all that she needed to know.

"Never mind," she said, "I told you I wasn't goin' to rake up nothin', an' I mean to keep my word. Come on in here. This is a quiet place. You're goin' to buy me a drink, anyhow, just to show that we're still friends."

He brightened at this indicated avenue of escape.

"*Sure* we're still friends," he declared, "an' you can haf all you vant to *drink,* too."

She slipped her hand into his—she could do it, she had learned, without the dumb flesh seeming to shrink from that contact—and pressed it.

They went into the deserted "ladies' room" of the saloon to which she had referred, and sat down there, facing each other under a light turned kindly low.

"Vhiskey?" asked Max.

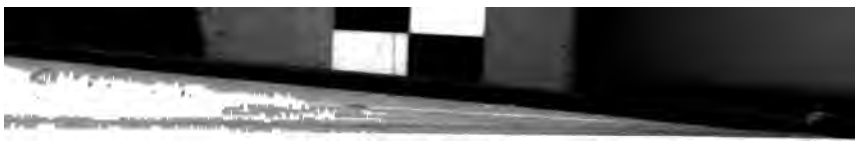
"Yes," said Mary.

"Two of 'em," ordered Max of the waiter *that had* answered his ring, "an' don'd make

ɔ *stingy* like most you fellers ofer this

man brought the liquor, placed it before
and went away.
:ll," said Max, raising his glass, smiling his
nile, and apparently forgetting that he had
:nied whiskey; " here ve are, *ain't* it? "
Mary was remembering another night and an-
drink she did not say so; instead, as Max tilted
ek head far back between his shoulders and
:d the whiskey down his throat, her hand
:d for the instant when his gray eyes were on
ling and that instant poured the liquor from
/n glass to the floor. When her companion's
ame forward her fingers, wrapped about the
were just withdrawing it from her lips.
can drink that better'n I used to," she said.
ĸ grinned again. So long as she did not up-
him for his part in it, so long as she did not
ɔ the details of its earlier stages, he had no
on to hearing of her past, was even languidly
ɨ about it, and was certainly sorry that it had
ɔught her to more seeming prosperity.
ɔu sure didn't take that like you vasn't *used*
," he said.
ll take another just to show you how," she
·ed, and pressed the nearest button.
s time his eyes were on her and she had to
But she did not scruple: so long as she
:d her head and Max lost his, the effect
: alcohol on her system concerned her but

:y had a third drink, for " old time's sake," as



Mary suggested, and this she succeeded in pouring down her dress-front. At the fourth, Max began to show signs of fear that he would have a drunken woman on his hands, but Mary's patent sobriety soon reassured him, and overcame his protests against a fifth by recalling his promise of liberality.

His cold eyes sparkled into a faint light. Little spots of red appeared in the olive of his cheeks. He felt the advance of the enemy in his veins and tried to go; but Mary began an imaginative narrative of her recent experiences and insisted on his listening. When he at last successfully interrupted that, she twitted him with being able to drink less than his pupils, and Max was once more forced to order. He was not drunk, or nearly drunk, but the fine edge of his discretion was dulled: he saw in the woman, who had now moved to his side, nothing that, whatever motives might be at work, could possibly harm him; he found something ludicrous in the situation. Her looks seemed better than they had appeared an hour earlier, and her tentative advances flattered him.

Mary, though she had drunk more than was good for her, had managed to spill enough liquor to retain all the sobriety she needed; but, when they at last rose, she swayed a little unsteadily.

"Now," she said, "you'll just buy me a half-pint for my head in the mornin', an' then you'll walk as far as my door."

Still enjoying the piquancy of the affair, he obeyed her. He even consented to come to her hall-bedroom with her—a room the exact reproduction of that which she had formerly rented farther uptown—and

e, forgetful of the provision against the morning,
· finished the half-pint.

ıt last he stood up from the bed on which he had
ı sitting while she, opposite, used the single chair.

Vell," he said, grinning; "it's been good to see
again, und maybe I'll gome back some efenin'."

he rose before him. The light was at her back
her face resumed, as she stood there, some fur-
traces of its earlier grace. The eyes seemed to
en, the cheeks were a natural pink beneath their
ing of rouge, and her russet hair, curling about
face, relieved the harder outlines and cast a
:le shadow around the neck. She spread out her
s.

Kiss me," she said.

Ie smiled and leaned condescendingly toward her.

What's your hurry?" she murmured.

Ie looked at her, and the weak light and the
ng liquor stood her in good stead.

I ain't in no hurry," he smiled.

he met him smile for smile—and then, in a sud-
sense of triumph, she flung back her head and
;hed.

t was not until three hours later that he finally
her, but he left hurriedly, for the remorseless
/ light of morning was coming in at the window,
it fell upon her as she wrapped a soiled pink
ona around her shivering figure and slipped her
into a pair of rundown Turkish slippers.

Good-by," he said, looking away from her.

Wait a minute," said Mary. "I'll go with you
he door."

he did go. She followed him down the dark

stairway, creaking noisily under their shamed feet, and she stood for a moment in the black hall, holding the brass knob of the door, as he passed to the step outside. Mary slipped the dead-latch, ready to bolt the door.

"Max," she said.

He turned quickly, nearly knocking over, as he did so, the milk-bottles that were lined, in a white row, upon the step.

"Yes?" he returned, and grinned sheepishly.

She thrust out her towsled head and looked up and down the gray morning street. The block was empty. She drew her head clear of the door. She was still trembling, but from neither cold nor fear.

"You ain't goin' without kissin' me?" she asked.

But a reaction of disgust had seized him.

"Yes, I am," he said.

Mary's one hand tightened on the knob; the other flattened itself against the nearest panel of the door, ready to push hard.

"All right," she replied, with a sudden change in her voice that, still low, became tense and metallic. "You think I'm—I'm done for, Max. Well—*you're done for, too!*"

The man's jaw dropped. His olive face was ashen. His eyes stared.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

Mary's mouth was wreathed in a smile.

"You know," she answered.

Max retreated so suddenly that he nearly fell down the stone steps.

"You've—you've——" he gasped.

"*Yes,*" said Mary.

's a lie! You're tryin' to scare me!" His
orked spasmodically. "It's a damned lie!"
eated.
on don't believe me?" the girl inquired.
she had looked for heroics, if she had feared
rama, she was as yet disappointed. The knees
x shook under him; he was in abject terror.
's a lie," he muttered over and over. "It's
n' lie!"
hink what you please," said Mary. She was
niling, still serene. "You believed I'd forgot,
you? Well, I didn't forget, Max Crossman,
w you'll remember. If you don't yet think
ivin' you a straight story, all you have to do
one thing: *wait.*"
x uttered an inarticulate cry and threw him-
: her, but he only bashed his head against the
door.
ry had shut it, and in time. Behind it, in the
allway, she lay half fainting.
's the last of you, Max," she laughed.
l it was.

XXVIII

HUSKS OF THE SWINE

MARY was too ill to go to work that night, and on the night following she was no better. The shock, the spasm of success, the recoil, not moral but physical, after the satisfaction of a supreme desire—these things were, of themselves, enough to leave her prostrate. But, in addition to these, she had, while standing at that open door, contracted one of those heavy colds to which she was now rendered especially susceptible. Through long hours of the day and the darkness she tossed among the hot sheets of her bed, sometimes with her teeth clicking in a chill, again with her body burning in a fever, but always revolving in her seething brain the details of the vengeance that she had wrought.

Her physical sufferings mattered little to her. There were hours when she was wholly incapable of feeling them. When the inertia of the state of reaction began at last to wear away, it left her with a glow of recollection so great that there seemed no place for lesser sensation. She had accomplished her great work, she had achieved her mission. What she had done had been done solely for her own heart's sake; there had been no delusion of a celestial command, no distorted thought of a social duty; yet, the impulse, however utilitarian, had been supreme,



d filled her with a sense of triumph that,
of the proper title, she was sure was happi-

r head and an unwounded heart would have
ıough of life to see that even Max Cross-
not entirely to blame. A better brain could
ked back into the past. It could have seen
the type of all his kind, the symbol of every
the great company of slavers, the inevitable
of a system blind both to its own interests
the interests of the race. It could have seen
ld, one of half a dozen born to a woman that
not, properly, have cared for three. It could
seen that child neglected, dirty, forgotten,
d, by day, in the bedroom where the whole
y tried vainly to sleep by night, learning the
st facts of life from the worst of teachers: the
ped childish brain—and going out, at last, upon
treet, with passions prematurely developed and
rted. It could have seen the social order shape
child into society's enemy: the starved boy-pick-
t sent to the monstrously misnamed "reforma-
"; the same child branded as a criminal, with
to shelter or to trust him, and with a knowl-
gained in the state's own institution, which
him to be only a crafty gorilla to harass the
It could have seen the fatal line of least re-
ıce as clearly in the resultant man as it is seen
e life of him that does no more than wreck a
or steal a corporation, and, hideous as its
e is in the one instance, it would have seen that
ne was the same in all.

ıt Mary never doubted her justice, and never

regretted it. One only thought troubled her: she was afraid that, by telling Max, she might have given him a warning sufficiently early to defeat her own ultimate purpose. It was a large part of her plan that he should know whose hand had struck him, and, for a man in his business, the only way in which she could make that knowledge certain was the way that she had followed. Yet what if he were in time to profit by her information? What if, even were he too late, he should guard and doctor himself with proper caution? She turned the questions over and over in her mind, but she had always to end in the faith that the worst had happened.

Sometimes, in the moments of exhaustion from the mad round of these inquiries, she reverted for relief to matters that touched her less nearly, and endeavored to occupy herself with the affairs of others. She thought of Dyker, and without resentment. She knew that he would use her written retraction to regain Marian's confidence, and she hoped that he would be successful. Again she fell to speculating upon the fate of Carrie Berkowicz and to wondering what had become of Katie. But upon her own past and present she did not permit herself to dwell, and always, with the certainty of a machine, her brain recurred to Max and her vengeance on him.

On the third evening, however, her landlady, entering with supper, reminded her, without mincing matters, that the rent was due, and Mary recalled that her little stock of money was exhausted.

"Can you wait till to-morrow morning, Mrs. Foote?" she asked.

Mrs. Foote was an ample woman, with round cheeks and robust frame, whose only dissipations were an over-indulgence in ritualism, babies, and the hospital. She had a high-church cleric to whom she confessed the sins of her neighbors; a wraithlike husband whose sole occupation appeared to be that indispensable to the regular increase of her family —and whom she would otherwise have failed altogether to tolerate—and such a passion for being ill that she could never quite believe in the illnesses of others.

"I can wait just that long, Miss Morton," she said; "but I'm sufferin' so from rheumatism in my fingers that I just know my old gastric trouble is comin' on ag'in, an' that'll mean another of them hospital-bills."

Mary raised her aching head.

"You won't have to wait any longer," she answered.

"I'm glad of it, Miss Morton," responded Mrs. Foote, "for there was a young lady lookin' at this room to-day an' she offered me a dollar more a week for it, an' I wouldn't like to lose you."

"You won't lose me," said Mary, to whom even sustained conversation was physical pain. "I'm goin' out to-night, an' I'll have plenty for you by the mornin'."

"You're sure?" asked the landlady.

"Of course I am. It'd be a pity if I couldn't earn that much."

Mrs. Foote looked at Mary's face and seemed to doubt the foundation for her assurance.

"Well," she sighed, "I certainly hope you can."



For some minutes after the door closed, Mary lay still. She had again been brought face to face with the most poignant of tragedies, the tragedy of living.

An hour earlier, had she questioned herself, she would have said that she was careless of life, that neither this earth nor the quitting of it interested her, that continued existence was a matter of indifference. Then she was in that state of exultation above things mundane which is produced only by great sorrow, great joy, or the great revenges that are both grief and triumph. But now the words of the landlady had brought her back from the indulgence of contemplation to the necessity of action. Mary's insidious, implacable disease had completed what her business had begun, and what her business alone would have completed far more slowly. The few emotions that she was now capable of feeling were the more intense because of their rarity, but their intensity was equaled by their brevity and, when the moment had gone, it left her even more of a moral weakling than it had found her.

She knew Mrs. Foote and her tribe too well to deceive herself as to what must happen should the morning dawn upon an empty stocking. Life held nothing for which Mary greatly cared, but the instant of death contained all of which she was afraid. She did not greatly want to harm others by plying her trade in her present condition, but she could not think of others. Each step would be a separate wound to her tortured body and her throbbing head, but she understood that the landlady had to wring out the rents by the means that conditions had forced *upon* her; and so the worst of fears, the fear of

which is the fear of death, took this sick
:om her bed, dressed her in her best frock,
ıer out into the street.

Sixth Avenue, where fortune had often,
re, been kind to her, she met no significant
A passing girl or two, having missed her
ast few evenings, proffered a casual sym-
ıt that was all. Through the open doors
aymarket, she turned in, but there even the
t first disregarded her. Several men that
;nized in the boxes of the gallery around
hall nodded, but immediately looked away.
man that she happened to know better than
e others did not appear at all to remember
his neighbor, who had frequently accom-
:r, signaled elsewhere.

ıs lonely. She approached two women who
ling the floor, arm in arm. She addressed
ı the familiarity of the craft.

ɔ," she said.

ne woman smiled, but her companion, a
le, tailor-made personage, swelled with dig-

better beat it," she declared.

flushed.

t's eatin' you?" she demanded.

don't belong here," the woman answered.
: a lofty survey of Mary's finery, and then
Goin'?"

s heart sickened, but she stood her ground.
' she said, "I ain't."

oor-manager was passing. The social ar-
ıed to him.

"Will," she asked, and her shrill voice seemed to carry over all the room; "what's this place comin' to? Throw that Fourteenth Street woman out o' here!"

This was enough. Mary left the place, and, still aching in every limb, turned through a narrow cross-street to Broadway. Her eyes swam as she lingered before shop-windows in the hope that someone she passed would accost her. Her throat was dry and it hurt her when she hummed into the ears of careless pedestrians. Nobody seemed to heed her. The night was cold, and she shook like a recovering drunkard. She mastered all her strength to speak plainly to a complacent man in a great ulster.

"Hello!" she said, trying to smile. "What's your hurry?"

The man looked at her and swore.

"You must think I'm blind," he ended.

She knew that she looked ill, but she knew that she must find money. She pleaded with age, because she knew it to be æsthetically tolerant; she ogled youth, because she knew it to be inexperienced; and she stationed herself at last near a saloon in a poorly lighted quarter, because she concluded that the men leaving such places were the only men to whom she was just then fitted successfully to appeal. It was one o'clock in the morning before she could induce even one of these to give way to her, and he, staggering with drink so that she had to support him with all her ebbing powers, insisted on stopping in an alleyway when, for the first time, she picked a pocket. A dollar and a half was all that she had *as she left him*, and the next dark figure that she

ped—she did not look at his face or care what
of face it was—answered her with sharp laugh-

A two-spot?" he cackled. "You have a few
e thinks comin', old girl!"
A dollar?" suggested Mary, tremulously.
I got just a half—an' you ain't worth a cent
e."
he took it—what would she not have taken?—
she worked on into the dawn, on with a mount-
fever and a sick determination, knowing now
her chances grew with the approach of morning
finding herself, when at last the morning came,
ı scarcely a dollar beyond the sum due for rent.
)uring all the months that followed she skirted
dire edge of starvation, more than half the time
ill to rise from her bed and aware that she was
o moment fit to rise. As her cold grew steadily
er her deeper illness steadily increased. It
ved on every exertion and seemed to gain each
n of strength that she lost. Things might thus
inue for almost any period, but she knew that
manner of life forbade absolute cure, and that,
ıe end, there waited a slow and loathsome death.
icipation made her faint; the melancholia and
or, which are symptomatic, sometimes nearly
ldened her. The last vestiges of the moral sense,
arly injured by previous experience, were almost
ılly destroyed; there was no social consciousness;
appeal of the individual widened until it occu-
l her entire horizon; there was room for nothing
the craven passion for life.
'at Dr. Helwig, when she went to see him, blinked



at her out of his deep-set eyes, and told her that she was not taking sufficient rest.

Mary twisted her helpless hands.

"How can I afford to take it?" she asked.

"Save your money," said he, patting her thin shoulders, and chuckling prosperously. "You girls never put aside a cent."

"We don't earn enough."

"Poof! That's what you all say. I know—I know. We men aren't such fools as you take us for."

But Mary, as each evening she made up before her little mirror, noted the gradual depreciation of her wares; each week she found it harder to pay rent and retain enough money for food. Mrs. Foote seemed to come every day, instead of every seventh, and yet each night business grew more difficult. Whenever Mary missed a few evenings, or whenever she changed her hunting-grounds, the police needed fresh payments. She surrendered one uptown cross-street after another. At last she deserted Broadway and patrolled only that Fourteenth Street which the woman at the Haymarket had so scornfully referred to and which had so wonderfully burst upon Mary's sight when she first stepped from the Hudson Tunnel upon the surface of Manhattan.

Spring, summer, and autumn passed, and a lean winter followed them. Mary caught another cold and was ill for a week. She went to work too soon and had to go back to bed for several days and remain idle for several nights. At last, with the ancient fear of the white race—the fear of that *poverty* which is death—gnawing at her vitals, she

struggled to her feet and tramped once more along Fourteenth Street from Sixth Avenue to Third.

But now the sword descended. Even the Fourteenth Street saloon best known for her purposes gave no fish to her net, and Eighth Street was little better. She was too tired to go farther; she had, the next morning, to offer Mrs. Foote only a third of what was due.

The landlady, whose bulk seemed to crowd the hall-bedroom, leaned heavily against its frail door. Mary thought the woman's slow, brown eyes more than commonly suspicious and her round face implacably hard. The tenant, with all explanation frozen upon her lips, handed over the clinking bits of money. They fell into the big, extended palm as a few drops of water might fall into a basin. Mrs. Foote began slowly to count the coins.

Mary watched, in fascinated silence, the counting of those few pieces of silver, each one of which seemed stained with her blood. She saw the landlady's expression change to one of incredulity. She saw the counting repeated.

Mrs. Foote again thrust out her grimy fingers.

"What's this?" she demanded.

"It's——" Mary looked at the floor. "It's the rent," she concluded, in a whisper.

"*What's* the rent?"

"That's all I have—just now. I thought—I thought, considerin' how long I've been here, you might wait a day for the rest, Mrs. Foote."

The landlady opened her hand, and Mary's little store of coin dropped to the bed.

"I can't take this," she said.



"You mean," asked Mary, with a quick gasp of hope, "that you'll let me keep it till I get the rest?"

"No, I don't mean nothin' of the sort," said Mrs. Foote. "I mean I've got to have the whole bill—right now."

Mary's heart sank.

"That's all I have," she said.

She had sunk to a seat on the tumbled bed, beside her scattered coins. Her thin hands were locked across her knees; the dirty pink kimona slipped lower from her shoulders at every frequent cough, and her eyes sought those of Mrs. Foote in dumb appeal. Her russet hair fell dully disordered about her hollow cheeks, and the rouge on her lips was purple.

"I'm sorry," pursued Mrs. Foote, who was too used to such incidents greatly to concern herself; "but I've got to make my living like anybody else does."

"I was expectin' some money this evenin'," said Mary.

"Hump!" sniffed the landlady.

"You don't believe that?"

"I don't care, Miss Morton; I can't care."

"But I"—Mary's fingers knotted tighter about her knees—"I was promised it," she lied, "an' I'm dead sure to get it then."

"I've heard that so many times," said Mrs. Foote, "that I knowed it by heart three year' ago."

"I could pawn somethin'," suggested Mary.

The landlady swept the bare room with a critical glance.

"What?" she asked.

"There was no adequate answer to be made.

Mary had tried to pledge her coat a few days before, and had been offered only an inadequate twenty-five cents for it.

"Then you won't—you can't wait?"

"No, I can't. I'm a sick woman myself; *my* rent's due, Miss Mary, an' the honest truth is that there's such a lot of women wantin' rooms that I'd only be doin' a injustice to my children not to take in a lady that could pay prompt—for a while."

Mary said nothing more. She packed her few belongings into her trunk, left it in the hall to be called for, and, as the chill evening fell, went away from the house with no idea where she was to find a lodging for the night. For an hour, though she was still weak, and the time was as yet so early, she walked up Broadway and, in the Forties, turned eastward for a few blocks, and so south again. Not far from the Grand Central Station she saw a little crowd gathered at a corner, and she stopped, rather for the luxury of standing still than from any curiosity.

The place was a church. Colored lights streamed from its rich stained-glass windows. Through its swinging doors there stole the scent of flowers and the sound of delicate music. A long row of carriages, the coachmen walking up and down to keep warm, stretched far around the corner.

Mary, shivering, worked her way quietly through the group of men and women on the sidewalk. In order to avoid a particularly entangled portion of the press, she started to walk along the steps by the tower-entrance, and then, seeing a side-door open, she listlessly turned toward it and looked in.



Far away up the vaulted nave the altar stood, white with damask and yellow with candles. The chancel was a garden, the whole building heavy with scent. Acolytes in scarlet were grouped about the robed priests. The choir had risen and, preceded by a lad that bore aloft a great brass cross, were forming into a singing procession, which slowly filed down the center aisle.

With a subdued scuffle and swish, the congregation also rose as the double line of choristers moved between them. Women craned their necks and men, pretending to look stolidly ahead of them, looked really out of the corners of their eyes. The choir, at the main door, divided and stood still. High overhead a deep-toned organ was playing the wedding-march from Lohengrin, and through the respectful line of white-clad boys there moved a man of regular features with lowered lids that hid his eyes, and a crisp brown mustache, which concealed his lips, and, on his arm, in the costume of a bride, a tall, graceful, pure woman, whose face was like a Greek cameo and in whose hand was a huge bunch of orchids and lilies-of-the-valley.

The fingers of a policeman touched Mary's arm.

"You'll have to get back," he said. "The people'll be comin' out in a minute."

But Mary did not wish to move.

"I've got a right here," she answered.

"You?" The policeman looked at her, and then laughed. "What right?" he asked.

"Isn't that Miss Lennox?"

"It was."

"*And* Judge Dyker?"

"Sure."

"Well, I gave him his marriage-license."

The policeman's good-nature was amused, but he forced her back to the street.

"No use," he said.

"An' I guess," said Mary bitterly—"I guess I paid for the bride's bouquet."

He did not reply, nor would she have heard him had he spoken, for in the stream of lesser guests now flowing from the rear of the church, which had been assigned to them, she was met by Katie Flanagan.

Not the piquant Katie of that photograph which used to adorn the bureau in the shabby tenement of bachelor Hermann Hoffmann, or the saucy girl of the second-hand clothing-store, or yet the frightened clerk that had at first evaded and at last defied the whiskered Mr. Porter. Those days were patently passed; Katie, like many another strong soul, had faced temptation and conquered it; and in the stead of the old days had come new days that brought a maturity and a dignity with which Katie was consciously satisfied. Her blue eyes were as glad as Mary remembered them, but their happiness was calm; her black hair was gathered in a formal knot, and her gown, though a better gown than that she used to wear, was of a simplicity almost severe.

Nevertheless, when she saw Mary, who sought evasion, Katie came frankly forward with outstretched hand. She recognized with regret, the change in her former acquaintance, but, knowing, as she must have known, its cause, she decided to ask no questions concerning it, and, if she offered no assistance, she at least proffered no advice.

"I just come to see the last o' Miss Marian," she explained. "Near the half of old Rivington Street's been tucked in here among th' swells to give the good word to her—Jews an' Irish—an' if the rabbis won't mind for the sheenies to come to such a heathen church, I thought Father Kelly might manage to forgive me."

Mary's brain was just then too dull to make any but a commonplace answer.

"You're lookin' well," she said.

"I ought to be, though there's a youngster expected. I tell Hermann—we was married a few weeks after last election—I don't know how we'll keep a family; but he just whistles an' says we'll make out some way, an' I guess we will."

"I'm glad," said Mary, "that you're married."

"Well, so am I—most of the time. Of course, the man has some queer ideas, but I'm doin' me best, with Father Kelly's help, to get 'em out of the head of him, an' nowadays, when he goes to one of them Socialist meetin's by night, I make him make up by goin' with me to early mass next mornin'."

She paused and surveyed again the pale woman before her. Essentially Katie had not changed. She had still, and would always have, the big, kind heart and the ready hand of her earlier days. But her condition had altered, and Mary's had evidently again fallen; she looked through an alien atmosphere, and her gaze was distant: the responsibilities and adjustment of young married life shackled her, and must continue to shackle her until they were no *longer new*. She did not know how to suggest any



:e, did not even believe that it was desired;)ugh she still felt that she must refrain from e inquiry, one effort she tried to make.

ı' you," she asked—" how're you gettin' on, ?"

ıry bit her lip.

'ine," she answered, huskily.

Are you——? There ain't——?" Katie floun-ł in a maze that she would, a few months pre-sly or a few months in the future, have cut her through with a strong directness. " There ain't nin' I could——?"

Mary's head shook, almost mechanically. It was : entirely that she felt unable to accept assistance)m her former protector; it was rather that she lt only that she must run away.

" Oh, no," she said, forcing a smile. " I'm doin' 'and."

The gala crowd was sweeping about them. It stled both girls and threatened momentarily to parate them. After all, there was nothing more be said.

" I—I got to go," murmured Mary. " I got an)pointment——"

" But you'll come to see us sometime, won't you lary?" asked Katie, and she gave her address. We'll have a fine party at the christenin', an' I'll ant you to see the baby."

" Oh, yes," said Mary; " yes, of course."

But Katie was hesitant.

" You're sure I can't do nothin'?" she asked.

" No, no. I——" Mary caught and pressed with hat warmth there was left in her fingers, the Irish



girl's hand. "Good-by," she concluded, and then, in order to keep up the farce of an appointment, she got upon a passing car.

Even if panic had not possessed her, she could not have accepted anything that Katie might offer. The most that could have been given her would have been but temporary, and what she must have was a means of earning a living.

She rode well downtown, and then walked farther southward. She slipped along the broad, yellow-lighted Bowery, gathering one or two quarters on her way, and wandered into the narrow, serpentine, fevered alleys of Chinatown. When an ugly rain began to fall, the open door of a mission attracted her, and she went in to rest.

It was the typical mission-room, very different from the uptown church where she had seen the wedding. This new place was mean; it had a low ceiling and was none too clean. The lights were flaring and the dull walls were enlivened by boldly lettered Bible texts. The air was close; on the platform, at the front of the place, a well-fed man was pleading, in sweat and tears, the cause of his religion; nearby, his double was making ready the reed-organ. Crowded into the unsteady benches were pimpled boys with lolling mouths and preternaturally knowing eyes; youths already old in disease and drink and crime; full-grown men, frog-eyed or blear-eyed, who needed only the faculty of firmness and the chance to cultivate it; old men, who had lost their hold upon work in a country still too barbarous to pension its aged; and, though there were no young girls, here and there Mary saw a few women, bedraggled, sod-

den, hideous, because men had at some time thought them *chic,* dainty, beautiful.

One of the "workers" attached to the place—a bland, prosperous man, with a pleasant smile—approached Mary and shook her hand as if he were an old acquaintance. He had fat red cheeks, firm teeth, and kindly eyes.

"I'm glad to see you, sister," he said. "Are you saved?"

Mary's childhood had heard some of the phraseology of evangelicalism. She understood, but she had come to receive worldly, not spiritual, warmth.

"No," she said, "I ain't."

The "worker," however, was accustomed to that reply. He patted her shoulder.

"Don't you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?" he asked.

"Well," said Mary, "I never thought much about Him."

She looked at the floor. She was cold and hungry and afraid.

"Then," responded the man, with genuine earnestness, "you ought to begin to think. No man knoweth the hour of His comin'. He is ready with the Free Gift. Don't you want to come to Him?"

Mary's life had been one in which there had been small time for the cultivation of religious emotion, and no time at all for the cultivation of religious thought. At her home she had learned as much by rote as she had had to learn, but what she got she held only as so many tasks performed. The words were lessons to be mastered; if they had any relation to facts, those facts were things not to be faced until



an age of discretion, and, pending the arrival of that age, the lessons had been stored away with a bland, childish practicality. What followed later had driven out all that preceded it. The shock of her capture; the wild, new order of existence; the endeavor to escape; the battle of service among new conditions; and, at last, the dulling of all the finer sensibilities and the final fight for a mere chance to continue alive—these were circumstances neither propitious to theology nor favorable to faith.

She glanced at the mission-worker, and then glanced away.

"I dunno," she said. "I guess I ain't the kind of woman religion can do much for."

"Don't say that," protested the man. His eyes shone with zeal and his voice was tender. "His grace is free for all who come. His mercy is from everlastin' to everlastin'. I've been a sinner myself" —the speaker's voice swelled with a real pride—"a terrible sinner, an' I know what I say, praise the Lord. The meaner an' viler we are, the more Jesus needs us. Just open your heart. Just accept Him, an' you'll never know no more trouble in this world nor the next."

"Would I get a job?" asked Mary.

The man shook his head, sadly.

"That ain't no way to think about salvation," he declared. "What's freely given ought to be freely received. Now is the appointed time."

"But I gotta make a livin'."

"I know it, I know it. We've all got to do that, but ain't it better to make one an' be saved than to *make* one an' be sent to hell-fire?"

She assented. "Only," she added, "I don't want to starve, even if I am saved."

It was his old difficulty.

"I know," he repeated; "an' we'd only be too glad to get you work if we could, but times are hard an' we've got a waitin'-list of fifty at this very minute. Here's some meal-tickets, sister, fer we want to do what we can, an' we know it's hard to save souls on empty stomachs. You just think it over an' see if I'm not right about religion."

She took the tickets and used them at a five-cent eating-house during the next day. That night she managed to secure a bed in a room over a saloon—a narrow, stuffy room that she shared with three other women of her own sort; but the next night she earned nothing, and she had been compelled to pawn her coat for food. She sought a bench in Union Square, where two tattered men made room for her. They gave her, to wrap about her chest, newspapers that they had gathered from the gutter; and she dozed until the sharp command of a policeman scattered her comrades, when they made their way to the rear of the Flatiron Building and stood, for warmth, over a grill that sent up occasional blasts of heat from the basement.

The rapidity with which one may descend from bad to worse is to be believed only by those who have been penniless and friendless in the larger cities. During the nights that followed, when Mary's clothes grew speedily ragged, dirty, and odorous, and when she earned just enough money to postpone starvation, she became a familiar of Chinatown, learned something of its blind paths and the tangled



passages of its fetid tenements. The almond-eyed Orientals tolerantly received her. She came to know the heavy odors of the opium, to chat with clay-white American girls, morphine-eaters, and cocaine and chloral victims, whose Chinese lovers were kind to them, and who never wanted to breathe the open air. She was borne with, but the market was over-supplied there, and she found no regular keeper. She came to envy the drug-enslaved women who had first sought the Mott Street district as missionaries, even the little Mongolian girls over whose slavery, so much lighter than her own, the city, from time to time, grew ludicrously excited. Her illness progressed, but, thanks to her hardy birth and the exercise of what care was at all possible, it progressed with a step so tardy as to give no indication of reaching its tragic end, other things being equal, for two years or more. She did not again go to see the doctor; she did not have to. The only things that he could have advised were the things that she was in no position to do. Beyond a certain limited amount of routine care, she was helpless.

One night, wet and exhausted, she met a sailor in Chatham Square, and drank long with him.

"Where you goin' to sleep to-night?" he asked, as they were about to part.

He was a short, black-browed man, who walked with a bow-legged roll. The short sleeves of his jacket displayed sinewy, bronze wrists with anchors tattooed upon them. His neck rose out of his low-cut mariner's shirt like the neck of a brown, fighting bull, and his black eyes, set deep under bushy, frowning brows, were red, like those of a bull that is dan-



gerous. He had been taken with a drunken passion for her, and though, when he kissed her, his upper lip scraped her face like a file, though his incessant grip of her hands hurt her, and though his heavy foot, seeking hers beneath the saloon-table, nearly crushed her own, she had to answer him with the professional smile.

"I dunno where I'll sleep," she said. "I guess Lee Hung's Letty'll put me up."

The sailor chucked her pointed chin so roughly that she thought her neck would crack.

"Why don't you come along o' me?" he inquired.

"Where's that?"

"To one o' our places. I know a beauty, an' I'll take good care o' you, an' afterward you can stay on."

"One of your places? What's those?"

"Places we visit. Places for seafarin' men. I tells you I knows a daisy—Big Lou's keepin' it—an' they needs a new gal there, for I stopped in as I come ashore this evenin' an' they tole me the one I knew after last voyage was buried only yesterday."

Mary shuddered.

"Is it all right?" she asked.

"All right? Course it's all right. But mind you,"—his black eyes leaped into a sudden threat—"I'm takin' you to-night. No philanderin'. For this night y'er my gal."

She looked away.

"Mind you that," he drunkenly repeated. "I'm mostly as gentle as Nathan's lamb, but when I'm tricked I'm ready with my hands. It's all right. It's a good place for a good time. Plenty to drink



an' the best o' company. Better come. I can fix it so's you can get a steady job there."

She shivered again, but she could not see why she should shiver. After all, she was glad to learn of any place where she would be sure of food to eat and a roof to cover her—and so she came to Summerton's.



XXIX

THE DOORS OF THE SHADOW

IT is a winding and tortuous way across Greenwich Village to Summerton's. The mazed course runs through streets that squirm like worms between a fisherman's fingers; it skirts cobbled courts that are in twilight at midday and damp in the longest drought; it turns and doubles up passages that seem blind, dodges through the very bones of tumbledown warehouses, storehouses, houses so ramshackle that the imagination can conjure no possible use for them, and it comes out at last into a foul thoroughfare that appears to be no better than a stinking alley, so close to the water's edge that the masts of the river's cluttered craft look as if they grew upon the dirty, sagging roofs opposite, and so near to the wharves that the green walls of the buildings are wet and odorous as if from a continuous application of bilge-water.

By day, when its residents are asleep, this street is loud with straining Norman horses, and clattering vans, and whip-cracking carters from the docks; but by night—and the nights are very dark down there—it becomes the haunt of sailors and longshoremen, drunk and shouting, or still and drugged. Then the blue electric lamps snap hysterically at distant corners; the uneven pavement mounts steeply upward, or dashes precipitately downward, with no



warning; laughter and curses and the crash of breaking glass or spluttering oaths issue now and again from the blackness at one's elbow, where, hidden among the warehouses, stand the houses for the storing of another sort of wares: the slave-houses maintained for mariners. Grotesque men, could you see them, stagger into dim entrances; terrible caricatures of women, if the light would show them, steal out and dart upon gutter-couched drunkards to paw their pockets. The night is alive with shadows, and the whole street a hungry, quivering quicksand.

Only by urging her eyes to their utmost could Mary make out anything of the house before which she and her unsteady companion came to pause. Even then all of which she could be sure was that, cowering under the shadow of some huge brick building, and skulking beneath its own rotting eaves, it was a half-sunken, old, narrow house, long since abandoned as unfit for legitimate purposes, and leaning rakishly to one side, like an ancient libertine that knows his evil and grins at it.

The sailor knocked lightly at an almost unseen door. A panel of it slid open and threw a ray of light on his face.

"Who's there?" asked a voice that was like the rasping of a file.

"It's Billy," said the sailor.

"Billy who?"

"Billy Stevens. Le'me in, Lou."

A pair of swollen eyes came to the open panel and looked, down the shaft of light, into the sinister face of Bill.

"*Who's th*at with you?" croaked the voice.

"A gal I got for you."

"Is she all right?"

"O' course she is, Lou; else what in hell'd she be doin' with me? Come on; le'me in."

The swollen eyes disappeared, and the panel was shut. There was a sound of the withdrawal of several bolts. Then the door swung open, was closed and relocked behind the newcomers, and Mary found herself in an unfurnished hall, not more than fifteen feet square, lighted by a dim lamp standing on the lowest step of a steep flight of stairs, and guarded by the owner of the swollen eyes.

At least in height, "Big Lou" was gigantic. She was fully six feet tall; she stooped a little and was extremely thin, with a hollow chest and narrow flanks, partially hidden by an old red cotton dressing-gown; but the long arms were like flails, and Lou had a temper that did not hesitate to use them as such. Her dirty brown hair was already touched with gray; she had almost no chin; her nose was a smudge in her sodden face and her cheeks were heavy with years of drunkenness. Her mouth hung loose and quarrelsome, and, as she bent over to look hard at Mary, her breath was foul.

She addressed herself, however, entirely to the black-browed Stevens.

"Where'd you git her?" she asked, as if Mary were one of the animals not gifted with articulate speech.

Stevens told of their meeting.

"Where's she from?"

The sailor gave a rapid and wholly fictitious biography.



"How old?"

"Twenty," said Bill.

"I ain't!" protested Mary.

But the sailor shot her an ugly look.

"Close your trap," he told her, and then, to Big Lou, he repeated: "Twenty."

Big Lou picked up the lamp and, holding it in one blackened claw, passed the other over Mary, with dexterous appraisement, from shoulders to knees.

"I'll give you a five-spot for her," she croaked.

"You'll go to the devil," retorted Bill.

"Six?"

"Ten."

"You're a damned thief, Stevens, that's what you are," growled the old woman. "I'll give you seven, an' not another God damned cent."

Mary leaned against the moist wall. She was now past caring, and she hardly heard.

"Make it seven-seventy-five," said Bill, with sudden ingratiation.

Big Lou raised the lamp again and again regarded the animal, her swollen eyes sharpening.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," she said, once more facing the sailor. "Are you goin' to stop here tonight?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll come up in the mornin' and take a closer look. If she passes that, I'll give you seven-fifty."

Bill's brown face worked in thought, but the thirst for liquor was upon him, and he com-

promised.

"All right," he said—"if you'll give me five down on account."

The giantess flung aside her red dressing-gown and, from a black cotton stocking that hung loose upon a shriveled shank, drew a few greasy bills. From these she reluctantly counted five, handed them to Stevens, and returned the rest to their original place of safety.

"G'on up," she said. "I stay here till work's done, an' take tolls."

From somewhere in the shadows she produced a black flask and, as Mary, with the sailor's tattooed hand tightly under her arm, began the steep ascent, Big Lou settled herself at her post of gatekeeper upon the lowest step.

Those stairs seemed almost perpendicular. They rose out of the darkness of the hallway at an alarming angle; each step was close upon a foot high; they were not a yard wide, their upper half was boxed between two walls, and they opened directly into the room that evidently served as the parlor of Big Lou Summerton's establishment.

The room was small and badly lighted by a kerosene hand-lamp, which stood upon a circular center-table and sent up a thin column of smoke to the sooty ceiling. A spotted lounge with dilapidated springs stood in one corner; the faded paper was peeling from the plaster, and a broken stove, which glowed an angry red, heated the place to a degree that was well-nigh unbearable. The air was stale and rancid, both from the company that was present and from a long entertainment of similar companies, in days gone by.



There were only two persons in the room. Both were seated at the table, both were drinking whiskey poured into ragged-edged glasses from a bottle that stood between them, and both were, or had been, women. Of these one coughed so sharply and constantly between her toothless gums, and was so shrunken under her blue calico mother-hubbard, that it was plain she would soon be nothing; while the other was a creature with face red and bloated, features stunted and coarse, eyes that glowed dully, and the voice of a crow.

Stevens presented Mary to them, and wasted no formalities.

"This here's a new one," he said, and, motioning his charge to a third chair, himself pulled up a fourth.

The two inmates received her with a loud duet that was almost a choral jeer. Two more glasses were produced from a shadowy cupboard, and the drinking recommenced.

Mary took one long drink and, wasted by privation, passed at once for some time into a daze in which, though she saw all, she reckoned little. She heard Stevens drop into the babbling stage of drunkenness; she noted that, though the women kept pace with his potations, they poured water into their own whiskey and gin into the sailor's; she saw him loll in his chair and sway over the table; she felt his heavy head drop at last on her thin shoulder, and she did not move while, as he lay there, his companions—now hers—went through his clothes and tiptoed out of a rear door.

It was then that, with a quick start, she regained

control of herself at the sound of speech below and the tread of feet on the stairs. A rough voice had assured Big Lou that "it was all right," and another voice was supplementing:

"Rest easy, my dear lady: we are paying as we go. Michael, here, is, as you know, a deck-hand on the admirable yacht of my admirable friend Marsden Payne, with whom I have been on a winter excursion; and he has kindly consented to show me his own section of little old New York."

Mary knew that voice, although she could not at once identify it; but, though she sprang up so quickly that she wakened the tumbling Stevens, who slipped to the floor, she could not escape before she found herself directly regarding the flushed face, glowing gray eyes, and disordered hair of Philip Beekman.

Still young and slim in his yachting clothes, he looked at her, swaying a little in the doorway, his back to those perilous stairs, and with no clear recog nition.

"Hello!" he said. "I think I've had the pleasure of meeting you somewhere before."

Mary's mouth tightened. She had herself now well in hand. She shook her russet head.

"I guess not," she said.

But her voice betrayed her.

"Good Lord!" said Beekman. The flush deepened on his face. With one hand he snatched his yachting-cap from his black hair; the other he suddenly held out to her, trembling. "Good Lord!" he repeated, this time with something that was nearly



awe in his tone. "I—I—it's *Violet!* Will you——? Won't you *please* shake hands?"

Scarcely less amazed by his manner than was he by her appearance, she took his hand.

Beekman turned to someone on the stairs behind him.

"Get out, Mike!" he said. "I've found a friend."

There was a plucking at his sleeve and the murmur of a concerned voice from the rear.

"No," said Philip; "get out. I tell you that I have found a friend. Go down to the tall lady and hand her your money and then make tracks for the yacht. You may tell Mr. Payne that I shall return in an hour."

Again a muffled protest from the dangerous stairway.

"Pardon me a moment," said Beekman, and turned full around. "Now, then," he continued to his guide, "you get out. I am perfectly well able to take care of myself, and I want a private talk. Do you expect me to kick you downstairs? No? I should probably break your back if I did.—Then, good-night."

He stood there while the deckhand's heavy feet clattered downward; waited until he had heard Big Lou grumblingly give Mike the means of exit, and then he turned again to Mary.

"What," he rapidly began, and his handsome face grew once more earnest, "what in the name of heaven are you doing in this den?—No," he continued, raising a quick hand; "don't tell me; I *remember how* I sent you out of my mother's house

and, upon my word, I'm afraid to hear. I couldn't do anything else—but I don't know. Anyhow, there's one thing sure: you need money. Well, I made a little in the game to-night—not much for Payne, but a good slice for me—and it's yours—it's yours—the Lord knows it ought to go to you!"

She had tried to stop him until he spoke of money; but when he mentioned that, she let him run on, let him search his pockets, and at last let him thrust something into her open hand.

"Here," he said; "take it; take it as a favor to me; take it, and remember what I said to you in Rose's. Watch your chance; get out of here; and for God's sake go back to your own home."

Her fingers closed upon the bills and transferred them to her stocking; and as she did this a movement on the floor made them both turn.

Bill Stevens, whom Mary had forgotten and whom Beekman had not seen, gathered himself together, and at last stood more or less upright upon his unsteady bowed legs. His heavy body rocked uneasily, but his dark face, with its bushy brows and sinister eyes, was thrust forward glowering. One sinewy tattooed hand gripped the back of a chair; the other, knotted into a hard fist, he raised slowly toward Beekman.

"It's your turn to go," he said, with a lingering oath. "This here's my gal; she b'longs to me—an' so does any money she gits."

Instantly Philip was his old, assured self. That quality which was most characteristic of him, that curious mixture of much that was bitter and a little



that was sweet, lighted his eyes and rang in his voice.

"Where do *you* come from?" he asked, smiling. "You look as if you got out of a trap-door, like the fairy in the play."

"None o' your business where I come from," said Bill. "The point is where I'll send you, if you ain't careful."

Mary, who did not like the looks of things, tried to interpose. She put the palms of her hands against the sailor's rough cheeks.

"Listen, Bill," she said, "this is an old friend of mine——"

"Likely!" grunted Bill.

"He is, though; ain't you?" Mary appealed, with a sidelong glance at Beekman.

"Certainly I am," said Philip.

Stevens lowered his fist, but his red eyes remained full of hate.

"I don't care who you are," he rumbled; "this here's my woman."

"All right," said Beekman; "that's to your credit, I'm sure: a man is known by the woman he keeps, and you can't have a better. Only, you see, my friend——"

"I ain't yer friend."

Once more Mary interposed.

"Just sit down, Bill," she urged. "Sit down an' have a drink with us. You can hear all we got to say."

Stevens sank into a chair, but when Beekman, with Mary between them, pushed the bottle toward *Bill, the sailor* would have none of it.

"I'll stop a bit," he said, "but I ain't goin' to drink with you, an' you needn't think it."

Philip was still undisturbed.

"Have it your own way," he said. "I know how it is: when a man falls in love, he swears off liquor; when he falls out of love he takes to liquor again —one sort of drunkenness is as much as he can stand at a time. I'll take a drink."

Mary, who now began to fear acute trouble, slipped a hand to Stevens, but he drew away.

"I think I'll smoke—if I may," continued the undisturbed Beekman. "A pipe is domestic, a cigar is philosophic, and a cigarette is a cynic: I shall have a cigarette. William?"—And he offered his silver case to the sailor.

"No," said Stevens, shortly.

Beekman tossed his head. Mary saw his gray eyes snap.

"William," he said, "you have got to learn that the best girl is never so good as the next. And you have got to learn manners. If you won't behave yourself properly, I think you had better leave."

Stevens's fingers opened and closed slowly.

"You go to hell," he said.

Beekman rose quietly. His cigarette was in one hand, and with the other, instead of threatening, he pointed to the stairway.

"Run along," he said.

Stevens jumped to his feet and crouched, like a panther ready to spring. Mary, overturning her chair, flung her arms about him and pinioned him in an embrace.



"Don't, Bill!" she whispered, and, over her shoulder: "Don't, Mr. Beekman! Can't you two be friends? Can't you see it's all right, Bill? Can't you let him alone, Mr. Beekman? Bill, you know how much I think of you."

She put her lips to his rough face. She whispered rapid, unthought lies into his ear. She caressed and cajoled him, and at last, when Philip had been persuaded into a half-scornful apology, she managed to get Stevens out of the room and started him down the stairway to seek sympathy of Big Lou while she herself had her talk with Beekman.

They sat down again at the round table and took a drink. Philip wanted to upbraid himself for his conduct to her in his mother's house, and yet, because he felt that he could have followed no course save that which he had taken, he did not know how to begin: all that he was sure of was that there was a wrong somewhere, and that he must somehow make confession of it. Mary, on the other hand, was divided between panic from the trouble so lately avoided and a desire to hear from Philip nothing approaching condolence.

She sought escape in the commonplace.

"You mustn't mind him," she said, with a nod toward the stairs down which the glowering Bill had departed.

"Not a bit," answered Beekman. "I only wanted to get rid of him in order to tell you how sorry I am for—for—oh, you know."

"Don't talk about that, Mr. Beekman—please."

"But I must talk about it."

"*Not now; not* yet. Tell me how you are."

"Oh, I'm as near right as I ever am, or ever will be. But, Violet——"

"You're looking rich."

His eyes followed hers to his gilt-buttoned yachting jacket.

"You can never judge a man by his clothes," he said. "Necessity is the mother of pretension."

"Are you married yet?"

"Hardly. There are only two things that a man can't honestly promise: to love, and to cease to love. I'm still too poor to afford those lies."

Mary only half understood his mood, but she was wholly intent on keeping him free of dreaded topics.

"Do you hear anything of the people we used to know?" she asked.

"Well," said Philip, "Rose was let off, you know, and is back at the old address and the old business." He looked at his watch and started. "By Jove," he continued; "I must have been pretty tight. I had no idea it was so late. I've got to be getting back to the yacht soon."

He stood up, his cap in one hand. Mary followed him to the stair door, and there he turned.

"Violet," he said, "I am going to tell you how sorry I am. I am going to tell you, whether you like to hear it or not."

The flush had gone from his face and eyes, leaving them simple and sincere.

Mary's voice faltered. She understood some things that she had never before understood.

"It didn't matter none," she replied. "You couldn't help it."



"I daresay I couldn't. I don't know. These things are too much for me. But I do know that I am sorry—sorry from the bottom of my heart. And if I can ever do anything—*anything*——"

He put out his hand, and, as she took it, he raised her hand to his lips.

At that instant there was a yell of rage from behind him. Mary, springing back, saw him half turn and reel. She saw a brown, tattooed hand close about his throat, choking his cry of alarm. She saw Bill Stevens's distorted face and red eyes appear above Beekman's shoulder. She saw a knife flash and bury itself deep in the young man's side. And then, with a tremendous smash, both men disappeared down those murderous, black stairs.

It seemed to Mary that she lost not a moment in running down to them; yet, when she reached the hall, the little drama was finished. The sailor was lying stunned in a corner, and Big Lou, with the rescued lamp beside her, was kneeling above Philip's body and running her quick claws through his pockets.

"Damn your soul, get upstairs!" she cried to Mary.

But Mary hesitated. Overhead she heard the skurry of skirts and hurried feet. Before her lay the man that had once so harmed her. His coat had been torn open and a great red smear grew larger and larger upon his white silk shirt. His mouth was twisted, but still. His gray eyes stared at the begrimed ceiling: Philip Beekman was dead.

She leaped across the body, tore back the bolts,

flung open the door, and nearly fell into the pitch-black street.

As she ran around the nearest corner, she heard the cry of Mike, the deckhand, who must have been waiting nearby, and then the sharp alarm-call of a policeman's night-stick.



XXX

HER FATHER'S HOUSE

HER way must have led her first to the river and then well northward: she did not know. She did not even know whether she ran or walked. All that she did know was that, at least for hours to come, she must put as many miles as she could between her own tossing thoughts and that still face with the staring eyes which lay at the foot of the steep, dark stairs in Summerton's. The clocks, had she looked at them, would have told her that the night was gone, but the winter darkness still enveloped the city when she found herself at last standing before an illuminated ticket-window and addressing a sleepy clerk at a ferry.

"I want a ticket," she said, and laid down one of the bills that Philip Beekman had given her.

"Where to?" yawned the clerk.

How did it happen that the name which rose to her lips was the name of her native town—a word that she had not uttered since the morning of her awakening in the house of Rose Légère? Perhaps it was because the dead man had, with almost his last words, pleaded with her to go home; perhaps it was because that name, of which she had for so long tried never to think, was, in reality, the one always nearest to her heart; perhaps it was only because no other town was familiar to her. In any

event, the name was spoken without consideration of the consequences, and, before she had time to pause or to repent, the clerk had handed her the change, and with it the bit of pasteboard that would bear her home.

"There's a boat in ten minutes," he said: "but you'll have to wait an hour in Jersey City. The first train doesn't go till six-five."

Of what immediately followed she had, thereafter, no clear recollection. She remembered only buying a cold sandwich and a half-pint of whiskey in a deserted café; crossing a bitterly cold, sullen stretch of water from a twinkling cañon to a shadowy shore; walking, for warmth, weary though she was, up and down, and up and down, along a damp, echoing train-shed, and then, at last, passing a clanging iron gate, climbing into a coach, and falling, nearly stupefied, into an uncomfortable, red-plush covered seat. She had but the faintest mental picture of changing cars, and none at all of any subsequent incident, until, in a black dawn, there flashed upon her, from between the frost-figures on the window, a bit of landscape that warned her she was approaching home.

The track came suddenly to the river-side. Beneath a gray sky, which, though the morning was well advanced, the sun seemed afraid to climb, there raced the mile-and-a-half wide strip of gray water. It crashed across a ruined dam; it swept above a submerged "chute" through which, years before, the big pine-rafts from the upper Alleghanies used to be hurled on their way to the Chesapeake. There had been a thaw: only here and there could Mary see the ominous crests of the rocks that threatened



the mid-channel; the islands, with trees bare of foliage, were under water, and far away, from the cloudy York County shore, the high hills rose above the mist, dun and cheerless, forbidding and cold. With a quick catch in her throat, she saw the river-road that she had so often tramped on holidays, now axle-deep in mud. Over there were the leafless woods where, when the boughs were green, the children used to picnic, and here, nearer the town, where patches of soiled snow hid under the stunted pines, was the path where one time came, for pink laurel branches, a girl that she had been. The engine whistled sharply and stopped.

Mary mechanically readjusted the hat that she had not touched since she had put it on for the work of the evening previous—the evening so long ago. She stepped to the platform.

The station was just as it had always been. It looked smaller and dirtier, but she knew that it had not changed; and a sharp pain shot through her heart at the realization that, in this town, everything had gone on its placid way while so much had been happening to one of its children. There were the same grinning gamins waiting for the New York newspapers; the same negro porters from the two hotels; the same station-master "calling the train," just as he used to call it in the days when she had watched the outgoing coaches with envious longings for a sight of the strange lands toward which they were bound.

Then, as her aching feet touched the cinder of the thoroughfare, she realized her danger. She had no plan, no scheme of accounting for herself; some

unreasoned impulse, partly, doubtless, the primal instinct that drives the wounded beast to its den, had overcome her fears and turned her face in the direction of the home whither she had, for so long, dreaded to return. But now she was seized with a terror of recognition by the townspeople, and so she lowered her head and walked, with the swiftness of panic, among the little knot of loafers about the station-door.

Now that she was here, what was she to say, what to do, where to turn? She moved, unable to evolve any order from the chaos of her thoughts. She could only go over and over the memory of that last day in school; the early violets, purple and fragrant, peeping through the lush grass on the lawns of Second Street; the flaming oriole in the Southwark yard; the lazy sunlight flowing through the open windows of Miss England's sleepy classroom. Mary's blue eyes were bright then, her mouth was red, her cheeks pink; lithe, strong-limbed, and firm of body, her walk had owned the easy, languid grace of a wild animal. And now, the lawns were bare; only a few persistent sparrows hopped in the gutters and along the ground; the sky was empty of sunlight, and she——

She came to a supreme pause. Habit had led her aimless feet. She was standing, in the full morning, before the two-story brick house that was her father's home.

She knew that the door remained unlocked from dawn to night; but she did not at once enter. She was afraid to go in, afraid to stand still, afraid to go away.



Then, from the next house, came decision. It was Etta's, her married sister's place, and she heard someone within it rattle at its door. Anything was better than a meeting with Etta: Mary quietly opened the door to her father's house and slipped inside.

She went down the brief, darkened hallway, past the drawn curtains of the parlor, through the twilight of the dining-room, and stopped at the open entrance to the small, crowded kitchen, where, among neatly arranged and brightly polished pots and pans, her mother was bending over the glowing stove.

Mrs. Denbigh looked up with a start. Still stooped, still hatchet-faced, but grayer and more shrunken, she stood there, her sleeves rolled from her thin forearms, her forehead wet by present labor, her mouth set hard by labors gone.

"Get out o' here!" she said.

"Mom!"

Mary raised and spread her arms in quick petitioning, and then, in that stranger, Mrs. Denbigh recognized her child.

"*You?*" she cried.

She dashed her damp hands to her checkered apron; she stepped toward her daughter with her own arms wide. She bent to kiss her—and she drew as suddenly away.

"There's liquor on your breath!" she gasped.

"I know," said Mary, her voice low and trembling. "I—I ain't been well, mom."

The kiss was given, but less abandonedly than it had promised, and, as the mother drew away, her

keen eyes searched the girl from face to feet. Over the multitude of maternal questions there rose the three for which Mary was least prepared.

"Mary—what is it? Where is he? Didn't he treat you right?"

They caught the girl at her weakest point.

"Who?" she asked.

"Who?"—Mrs. Denbigh's eyes grew stern again. —"Who? You needn't say no more than that still! I ought to have knowed when I seen you. Nobody could look at you yet and not know. Why, you're—you're *old!* Your things are worn out. You——" her tone increased to loud accusations. "Where did you get them clothes?"

Mary's lips faltered.

"I bought 'em," she said.

"Did anybody see you come in here?"

"I don't know.—No, nobody did."

"Thank God for that!" Mrs. Denbigh pointed a long, gnarled finger at her daughter. She pointed it at the bedraggled hat, still bearing traces of a finery too pronounced for that small town. She pointed to the waist and to the skirt. "It's true, then!" she cried. "It's true, then! You've been a bad woman!"

In the doorway Mary swayed. She leaned heavily against the wall. She was too tired to lie.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Yes," her mother echoed; "yes—an' you own up to it! The whole town said it; your pop said it; they all told me yet—an' I stood up fer you; I showed 'em your letter; I says you was married; I kep' on believin' you'd write; I stuck to it—an' now



you come here to shame me. You come here when you're worn out—when no one else'll have you—you come here, brazen, not carin' still, a bad woman—*a bad woman*—an' I guess you think I'll take you in!"

Her poor face writhed. Her dim eyes shot fire. Her withered breasts rose and fell in a spasm of indignation and wounded pride.

Mary, still leaning against the kitchen wall, put out her hands as if to ward away a blow.

"Don't, mom," she said. "Please don't."

"I will! I've a mind to beat you. I'd like to know what possessed you to flaunt yourself in this place. You can't stay here. You can't stay in this house that you've shamed still, an' you can't stay in this town."

"Mom!"

"You can't stay in this town. Do you hear that? If you do, if you try to stay here and mock me, a decent woman, I'll have you arrested; I'll have you sent to the lock-up; I'll——"

"Mom," interrupted Mary. "I won't hurt you. I didn't mean to hurt nobody. I didn't come here to do no harm."

"How kin you come here yet without doin' harm? Ain't you done enough without comin' back here to shame your own folks?"

"But, mom," Mary pleaded, "I won't shame nobody; I'll do whatever you say."

Little Mrs. Denbigh collapsed upon a kitchen chair. She rocked from side to side. She fanned herself with her checkered apron; grief conquered anger; and long dried tears came at last to her old

eyes and coursed, unrestrained, down her hard cheeks.

"What did I ever do fer to deserve this?" she moaned. "What did I ever *do* to receive this judgment? A child o' mine! A child o' mine! An' her the baby that she was! Didn't her pop an' me bring her up the best we could? Ain't I always lived accordin' to the Lord's word? What have I done to deserve this?"

Mary stepped to the weeping woman's side. She put her fingers to the gray hair and stroked it, timidly.

"Go away!" cried the mother. "Don't you dare to touch me! Don't you dare yet to pollute me! Oh! A child o' mine to do this!"

She fell into another paroxysm of grief, and Mary sank to her knees and took one of the gnarled hands between her own hands.

"Listen, mom," she said; "I'll tell you all about it, an' then you'll know."

She did tell her, as much as she dared; but Mrs. Denbigh only half understood. The elder woman's life had been cast in a mold; it had long since hardened into a destined shape, and no sympathy on her own part, no explanations on the part of another, could alter her. Dire necessity she had often known, but she had not known it amid surroundings where the sufferer's only course was that which alone had been possible for Mary. If she softened, it was not because she comprehended, but because Mary was her child.

"Don't tell me no more," she said at last. "You could 'a' gone to work."



"I tried that, an' nobody'd have me."

"You could 'a' gone to some church-folk."

"I did, but they couldn't get me a job."

"You could 'a' gone to some institution a'ready."

"How'd I have lived after I come out?"

"Well, you shouldn't 'a' run away in the first place. Didn't we treat you right?"

To have answered that question in the negative would not have been to be altogether true, and Mary did not even yet see enough clearly to discern that the conditions which had driven her from home were economic forces that made parents and child equally blameless.

"Can't I stay here?" she appealed. "Can't I please stay here an' work for you?"

Mrs. Denbigh shook her head.

"I'd work hard. I'd help you. I wouldn't never complain. All I want is just to be quiet. I'd work hard. Nobody'd never know."

"It'd be all over town by evenin' still."

"No, it wouldn't. I'd say I was a widow. I'd say——"

"Think o' your pop," sobbed Mrs. Denbigh. "Why, he'd—he'd kill you, Mary!" The mother shivered as she considered the wrath of the giant, whom hard work had hardened past the touch of all the tenderer emotions. "He'd just beat you up an' throw you into the street for everybody to see!" She half rose in a new anxiety. "Why, he's on the early shift, an' he might come here 'most any minute. Etta might come in, an' Sallie'll be back from school soon."

"But, mom," Mary blindly persisted. "I'd work

so hard! I wouldn't never be cross. I'd help you. I'd do all the housework, an' you could teach me to cook the way you do."

"We got to think o' Sallie yet," continued Mrs. Denbigh. "Every time she gets mad now she says she'll run away like you done. We got to think o' her. She's a growin' girl, an' what'd it be to have you around her?"

"But, mom, I won't hurt her. Can't I just stay an' work, an' wash dishes, an' such things? I wouldn't mind washin' dishes"—Mary smiled wanly—"like I once did."

"An' then there's Etta," said the mother, still busied in her own confusion. "She's got a baby——"

"A baby!" Mary's heart leaped.

"Such a lovely baby girl——"

"Can't I——? Oh, mom, can't I just get a peep at it?"

"How could you?—An' we have to think what it'd be for her if you was here an' she growed up."

The prodigal choked with tears.

"Mom, mom!" she pleaded. "How'd I hurt 'em? You don't think I'd——?"

"The town'd think so, an' the town'd tell 'em so, too. An' anyways, Mary, we're poor, we're dreadful poor. The mill was shut down all summer an' fall. It's only just started a'ready, an' it's only workin' half-time now. We ain't had money fer months still, an' now it all goes fer old bills. We couldn't do it, even if we wanted to."

For half an hour more Mary begged, but she begged in vain; and though the mother ended by



another attack of tears, and though the two wept together in each other's arms, they knew that they were together for the last time.

"Your clothes are so thin!" quavered Mrs. Denbigh, with a pathetic endeavor to sink her grief in practical anxiety. "You ain't got no coat, an' your feet are near on the ground still."

Mrs. Denbigh had no money; there was literally not a cent in the house; but she unearthed from an old trunk, and pressed, for pawning, upon Mary, a heavy, old-fashioned gold bracelet, which had been a wedding-present; and, though the daughter protested that she had money enough to buy some clothes, the mother got her own coat upon the daughter's shoulders.

They were still standing in the kitchen, as women awaiting the summons of death, when first one steam-whistle and then another began to call across the town. It was noon, and the moment of puddler Denbigh's return.

Without a word they walked, hand in hand, across the short back-yard, for Mary, it was tacitly agreed, must not risk an appearance upon the street in the neighborhood of her father's house. Without a word, Mrs. Denbigh's knotted fingers opened the latch of the white-washed gate. Without a word mother and daughter flung themselves into each other's arms again, and then, still in silence, Mary trudged away.

She did not look back until she came to the first corner, and, when she got there, she saw her mother's shrunken body still at the gate, the old hand waving, the aproned figure shaking with sobs. It was still

there when Mary reached the second corner; but when she turned at the third, it was gone.

Her pain was no longer poignant. Grief had reached the mark whence it passes to stupefaction; and Mary pursued her way as if her actions were those suggested to a subject of hypnotic control. In order to avoid the crowd at the station, she walked on up the alley, until the alley ended in an intersecting turnpike along which ran the trolley line to the county-town. She waited there, stolidly, for a car, mounted that, descended at the end of the road, and, after another delay, climbed upon a train that would take her without change to Jersey City. For nearly twenty-four hours she had eaten nothing; but she bought another small flask at the terminus, and, as the ferry-boat glided between the creaking slips into the tossing water, she took a deep draught of whiskey.

She walked to the stern and looked over the side. It was night. Here gleamed the railway signs under which the boat had just passed—the signs of those roads that, she had now discovered, ended as fatally for her freedom as if they had ended in an insurmountable wall. Ahead towered the other walls, the black walls of that living prison—that vast, malevolent, conscious jail—into which she had once gone with such a store of hopes whereof not one had ever been fulfilled, of anticipated pleasures whereof not one had ever been tasted, and to which she must now, to serve out a life-sentence, return.

Must she return?

She looked up and down the dismal river, crowded with trafficking craft, and she remembered that other



river at home as she had seen it on the spring afternoon when she had played the truant from school. She remembered the swirling eddies across which the nearer hills had been changing from brown to green; she remembered the descending Donegal Valley, fresh with germinating life, the flowering shrubs, and the sap-wet trees along the shore, the scent of a warm April, and the music of the Susquehanna. These things she remembered, and then she looked again at the nearing city.

Must she return?

She touched the rail. Over that lay certain escape. The deck was deserted; the movement would be quick; the plunge——

She leaned forward, she saw the leaping, greedy, icy waves, and, with a loud sob, staggered back to the bench that ran along the exterior of the upper saloon.

She could not do it. With nothing but suffering and horrors to live for, she could not put an end to life. She was afraid of the cold; she was afraid of the struggle; she was afraid of the pang; she was afraid of Death. It was a new thing—Death; she had been afraid of it ever since that morning of her awakening when the thought of seeking it had first occurred to her. Since her first crossing of this water, her experiences had been a procession of new things, each more terrible than the last; she had come to dread the new, and this novelty of death she dreaded lest it should be the most terrible of all. Life, which had robbed her of everything else, had, at this last, robbed her of the courage to quit it.

Youth, hope, purity, strength, beauty, the ability

to work, even lust and hate—all these were dead within her, dead beyond possibility of resurrection. If Max had only given her a child! If he, or any-one of the others, had only killed her! But they had murdered Love, and the only thing that lived in her was the fear of death.

Out of the bitterness of her own heart, out of the abysses of her own knowledge of things as they are, she saw much of the truth. A rare good fortune had favored Katie Flanagan; but Mary, her parents, Rose and her girls, Carrie, Policeman Riley and Magistrate Dyker, even Angel and Max—not one of them, well regarded, could be unequivocally condemned. They were all, preying or preyed upon, an inevitable result. They were but the types of millions everywhere. New York itself, with all its women-slaves and men-slaves, must be but an illustration of what the other cities of the world are and have been. No rescue of a slave could put an end to the slavery. Something was wrong; but what that something was, or how it was ever to be made right, she could not guess. She knew only that, down the years, wherever walked the great god Poverty, that great god led Prostitution by the hand.

Finally comprehending, if unable to formulate, these things, at ten o'clock that night Mary Denbigh, remembering what Philip Beekman had told her, rang the doorbell of a familiar house and faced what she would once have feared more than death—she faced complacent, untroubled, prosperous, and protected Rose Légère.

The woman, still the good-natured woman of the brewery-calendar, cut short Mary's flow of apologies.



"Ferget it," she said. "It don't matter what you did. You didn't know any better. Here: just take this ten dollars and tell me what else I can do for you."

And Mary pushed the money away.

"I don't want that," she said. "I want—oh, Miss Rose, won't you please take me back?"

But Rose, surveying the human ruin before her, shook, very positively, her masses of yellow hair.

"No," she answered, "I'm sorry, but I can't do that. It wouldn't be good business. You see, the life's got you, Violet: you're all in."

EDITOR'S NOTE

The facts presented in the "House of Bondage" are so startling as to seem incredible. They are, however, well known to those who have become familiar with the problem of the social evil, and can be duplicated indefinitely from court records, the findings of various investigating bodies, such as the Congressional Commission, whose report on this subject is known as Senate Document No. 196, Importing Women for Immoral Purposes, being a partial report from the Immigration Commission on the Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purposes, published December 10, 1909, a book entitled "Panders and Their White Slaves," by Clifford G. Roe, in which the author gives in detail many cases successfully prosecuted by him in Chicago in the last year or two; and from the sworn testimony taken before the special Grand Jury appointed in New York in January, 1910, to investigate the so-called White Slave Traffic, the full report of which investigation follows.



WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC

Presentment of the Additional Grand Jury for the January Term of the Court of General Sessions in the County of New York, in the matter of the investigation as to the alleged existence in the County of New York of an organized traffic in women for immoral purposes.

Filed June 29, 1910.

COURT OF GENERAL SESSIONS IN AND FOR THE CITY AND COUNTY OF NEW YORK.

In the matter of the investigation as to the alleged existence in the County of New York of an organized traffic in women for immoral purposes.

To the Hon. THOMAS C. O'SULLIVAN, Judge of the Court of General Sessions.

Sir:

We, the members of the Additional Grand Jury for the January term, 1910, respectfully present as follows:

In the charge delivered to us by Your Honor on the 3rd day of January, 1910, Your Honor said:

"There have been spread broadcast in the public prints statements that the City of New York is a center or clearing house for an organized traffic in women for immoral purposes, or what has come to be known as the 'white slave' traffic. Some of these statements may have been published with ulterior motive and may have been mere sensationalism, but some are said to be based upon official investigation and charges made by persons who profess to have knowledge of the fact.

* * * * * * *

"This traffic in women, it is charged, follows two main objects: First, the procuring of women of previous chaste character, who through force, duress, or deceit are finally made to live lives of prostitution; second, the procuring of women who are already prostitutes and placing them with their consent in houses where they may ply their trade.

* * * * * * *

"But the main object, gentlemen, which I desire you to keep in mind throughout your investigation is the uncovering not alone of isolated offenses, but of an organization, if any such exists, for a traffic in the bodies of women.



"You should make your investigation sufficiently broad to cover not only present conditions, but also conditions existing in the past within the statute of limitations.

"I charge you that it is your duty to pursue this inquiry into every channel open to you and to present to the court the facts found by you."

Pursuant to Your Honor's instructions, we have made an investigation into the matters referred to in Your Honor's charge. We have called before our body every person whom we could find who we had reason to believe might have information on the subject. Among others were the following: a member of the National Immigration Commission assigned to investigate conditions relating to importing, seducing, and dealing in women in the City of New York; the author of an article which appeared in *McClure's Magazine* for November, 1909, entitled "The Daughters of the Poor"; a former under sheriff in the County of Essex, New Jersey; the President of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; the author of a pamphlet entitled "The White Slave Traffic"; a member of the New York State Immigration Commission appointed by Governor Hughes in 1908; a former Police Commissioner of the City of New York; detectives and other agents especially employed in connection with this investigation; members and ex-members of the New York Independent Benevolent Association; witnesses in the specific cases presented to this Grand Jury, as well as a number of other citizens. In addition, the foreman, the District Attorney and his Assistants, have interviewed representatives of the following organizations:

The Committee of Fourteen; its Research Committee;
The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children;
The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice;
The Charity Organization Society;
The Society for Improving the Condition of the Poor;
The Committee on Amusements and Vacation Resources of Working Girls;
The Society for Social and Moral Prophylaxis;



The Florence Crittenden Mission;
The New York Probation Association;
The Headworkers of various Social Settlements;
The Women's Municipal League;
The Society for the Prevention of Crime;
The Bureau of Municipal Research.

We also published in the daily press of this city on the 6th day of May the following:

"The Additional Grand Jury, sworn in in January by Judge O'Sullivan of the Court of General Sessions, was charged with the investigation of the truth or falsity of certain statements which had been publicly made during the past few months to the effect that the City of New York is a center or clearing house for an organized traffic in women for immoral purposes, or what has come to be known as the 'white-slave traffic.'

"Pursuant to this charge the Grand Jury has been seeking legal evidence on this subject from all available sources. The information which many citizens have volunteered to give has proved in most cases to be general rather than specific.

"Before closing its investigation the Grand Jury desires to announce publicly that it will be glad to receive definite, specific information as to the existence in this county of any traffic in women for immoral purposes from any citizen or official or other individual who has such information. Those who are willing to assist the Grand Jury in its investigation are asked to call at the office of James B. Reynolds, Assistant District Attorney, Criminal Court Building (within the next week). It will save the time of many individuals and of Mr. Reynolds if only those appear who are willing and able to present facts regarding the specific matter above stated.

"On behalf of the Additional January Grand Jury.

"JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR.,
"Foreman."

As a part of this investigation evidence has been presented to us and we have found 54 indictments:

22 for rape;
16 for abduction;



10 for maintaining disorderly houses, 7 of which were Raines-Law Hotels;

6 for the violation of Section 2460 of the Penal Law, entitled "Compulsory Prostitution of Women."

We have found no evidence of the existence in the County of New York of any organization or organizations, incorporated or otherwise, engaged as such in the traffic in women for immoral purposes, nor have we found evidence of an organized traffic in women for immoral purposes.

It appears, on the other hand, from indictments found by us and from the testimony of witnesses that a trafficking in the bodies of women does exist and is carried on by individuals acting for their own individual benefit, and that these persons are known to each other and are more or less informally associated.

We have also found that associations and clubs, composed mainly or wholly of those profiting from vice, have existed, and that one such association still exists. These associations and clubs are analogous to commercial bodies in other fields, which, while not directly engaged in commerce, are composed of individuals all of whom as individuals are so engaged.

The "incorporated syndicates" and "international bands" referred to in published statements, we find to be such informal relations as have just been spoken of, while the "international headquarters," "clearing houses" and "pretentious clubhouses" mentioned are cafés or other so-called "hang-outs" where people interested in the various branches of the business resort. These and the houses of prostitution are also referred to as "markets."

The "dealers" and "operators" are the so-called "pimps" and "procurers," the "pimp" being referred to as the "retailer" and the manager of houses as the "wholesaler."

The only association composed mainly or wholly of those profiting from vice, of the present existence of which we



have evidence, is the New York Independent Benevolent Association, organized in this city in 1894 and incorporated in 1896. This association has had an average membership of about 100. Its alleged purpose is to assist its members in case of illness, to give aid in case of death, and to assure proper burial rites.

After an exhaustive investigation into the activities of the association and of its members we find no evidence that the association as such does now or has ever trafficked in women, but that such traffic is being or has been carried on by various members as individuals. We find that the members of this association are scattered in many cities throughout the United States. From the testimony adduced it appears probable that the social relations of the members and the opportunity thereby afforded of communicating with one another in various cities have facilitated the conduct of their individual business.

On one occasion where a member was convicted of maintaining a disorderly house and a fine of $1,000 was imposed upon him in the City of Newark, New Jersey, the association voted $500 for his aid. On another occasion in the City of Newark, New Jersey, where several of the members of the association were arrested on the charge of keeping and maintaining disorderly houses, and one member was in prison, the then President went to Newark, declared to the Under Sheriff that he was the President of the New York Independent Benevolent Association, and entered into negotiations with the authorities in Newark on behalf of the members who had been arrested. We have, however, no evidence of any such instance in the County of New York.

It appears from the testimony of various members and ex-members of the said association that its membership is almost entirely composed of persons who are now or have been engaged in the operation of disorderly houses or who are living or have lived directly or indirectly upon the



proceeds of women's shame. None of these witnesses, in answer to specific questions, could name more than one or two present or past members whose record did not show them to have lived at some time upon the proceeds of prostitution in one form or another. They claim, however, that all members who have been convicted of a crime are expelled from the organization when the proof of that fact has been submitted, the offense apparently being not the commission of a crime, but conviction. It would appear that this procedure is for the purpose of protecting the individual if possible, and, failing in that, of freeing the association from criticism.

Finding no evidence of an organized traffic in women, but of a traffic carried on by individuals, we have made a special and careful investigation along this line. Owing to the publicity given to the inquiry at its inception, it has been difficult to get legal evidence of the actual purchase and sale of women for immoral purposes, and our investigators have been informed in different quarters that a number of formerly active dealers in women had either temporarily gone out of business or had transferred their activities to other cities. However, five self-declared dealers in women had agreed upon various occasions to supply women to our agents, but because of their extreme caution and the fear aroused by the continued sitting of this Grand Jury, these promises were fulfilled in only two instances, in each of which two girls were secured for our agents at a price, in the one case of $60 each and in the other of $75 each. Indictments have been found against these two persons; one pleaded guilty and the other was convicted on trial.

All of these parties boasted to our investigators of their extensive local and interstate operations in the recent past. They specifically mentioned the cities to which they had forwarded women and described their operations as having at that time been free from danger of detection.

Our investigators also testified as to the methods and

means used by these people in replenishing the supply of women and in entrapping innocent girls.

Quoting again from Your Honor's charge:

"This traffic in women, it is charged, follows two main objects: First, the procuring of women of previous chaste character, who through force, duress, or deceit are finally made to live lives of prostitution; second, the procuring of women who are already prostitutes and placing them with their consent in houses where they may ply their trade."

Under the first heading, namely, the procuring of women of previous chaste character, we find the most active force to be the so-called "pimp." There are in the County of New York a considerable and increasing number of these creatures who live wholly or in part upon the earnings of girls or women who practice prostitution. With promises of marriage, of fine clothing, of greater personal independence, these men often induce girls to live with them and after a brief period, with threats of exposure or of physical violence, force them to go upon the streets as common prostitutes and to turn over the proceeds of their shame to their seducers, who live largely, if not wholly, upon the money thus earned by their victims. This system is illustrated in an indictment and conviction where the defendant by such promises induced a girl of fifteen to leave her home and within two weeks put her on the streets as a common prostitute.

We find also that these persons ill-treat and abuse the women with whom they live and beat them at times in order to force them to greater activity and longer hours of work on the streets. This is illustrated in the case of another defendant who was indicted and convicted for brutally slashing with a knife the face of "his girl" and leaving her disfigured for life, merely because she was no longer willing to prostitute herself for his benefit.

In this connection mention should be made of the moving



picture shows as furnishing to this class of persons an opportunity for leading girls into a life of shame. These shows naturally attract large numbers of children, and while the law provides that no child under the age of sixteen shall be allowed to attend them unaccompanied by parent or guardian, it is a fact, as shown by the number of arrests and convictions that the law is frequently violated. Evidence upon which indictments have been found and convictions subsequently secured, has been given which shows that, in spite of the activities of the authorities in watching these places, many girls owe their ruin to frequenting them. An instance of the above is the case of a defendant indicted by this Grand Jury and convicted before Your Honor, where three girls met as many young men at a Harlem moving picture show. At the end of the performance, the young men were taken by an employee of the place through a door in the rear into a connecting building—used as a fire exit for the moving picture show—where they met the girls and all passed the night together.

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has furnished statistics showing that since the 13th day of December, 1906, 33 cases of rape and seduction originated in moving picture shows, in some instances the perpetrators being the employees of the shows.

It is not the purpose of this reference to bring an indictment against the moving picture show, which under proper restrictions may be an important and valuable educational and recreative factor, but rather to point out possible dangers inherent in performances carried on in the darkness and the importance of the observance of safeguards by parents or guardians, and of the strict enforcement of the law for the protection of children.

Under the second heading in that portion of Your Honor's charge quoted above, which refers to the procuring of women who are already prostitutes and placing them with their consent in houses where they may ply their trade, the

Grand Jury has made a special study of the class of disorderly houses commonly known as "Raines-Law Hotels," the chief business of many of which is to provide a place where women of the streets may take their customers. The testimony given shows that girls who brought their patrons to certain hotels of this class were allowed rebates on the amount charged their patrons for rooms. Upon the evidence brought before us, indictments were found against seven of the most notorious of these hotels.

The abuse which has grown up in the conversion of the so-called massage and manicure parlor into a disorderly house, frequently of the most perverted kind, has received our careful study under this same heading. A special investigation has been made of some 125 massage and manicure parlors, in this county. Less than half of these establishments were found to be equipped for legitimate purposes, most of them being nothing but disorderly houses. The operators in such places had no knowledge of massage treatment, and in certain cases where certificates of alleged massage institutes were on the walls of the premises they frankly admitted that they had no training in massage and did not even know the persons whose signatures appeared on the certificates.

In view of the above, it would seem important that these parlors should be licensed by the Health Department of the city and that all operators in them should also have a license from some approved health or medical authority, and further, that proper supervision should be exercised to insure their operation for the legitimate purposes for which they are licensed.

The spreading of prostitution in its various forms from the well-known disorderly house into apartment and tenement houses presents a very grave danger to the home. It is inevitable that children who have daily evidence of the apparent comfort, ease, and oftentimes luxury in which women of this class live should not only become hardened to



the evil, but be easily drawn into the life. The existing laws for the suppression of this vice in apartment and tenement houses should be most rigorously enforced and if necessary additional legislation enacted.

But of the evils investigated under this head, the most menacing is the so-called "pimp" who, as already stated, while often active in seducing girls, is, to what seems to be an increasing extent, living on the earnings of the professional prostitute, constantly driven by him to greater activity and more degrading practices.

We do not find that these persons are formally organized, but it would appear that the majority of the women of the street, as well as many of those who practice prostitution in houses or flats, are controlled by them and usually pay their entire earnings to them. They prescribe the hours and working places for these women, assist them in getting customers, protect them from interference when possible, and when the women are arrested do what they can to procure their release. While "their women" are at work, they spend much of their time in saloons and other resorts where they gather socially. Although operating individually, their common interest leads them to coöperate for mutual protection or for the recovery of women who may desert them, and for the maintenance of their authority over their particular women. It is an unwritten law among these men that the authority of the individual over the woman or women controlled by him is unquestioned by his associates to whatever extreme it may be carried.

To obtain a conviction against one of this class is most difficult, for through fear or personal liking, "his woman" is loath to become a witness against him, and without her evidence conviction is almost impossible.

Whatever one may think of the woman who adopts the profession of a prostitute by choice, all must agree that the *man* who in cold blood exploits a woman's body for his *own support* and profit is vile and despicable beyond ex-

pression. Only through the arousing of an intelligent and determined public sentiment which will back up the forces of law in their effort to ferret out and bring to justice the members of this debased class, is there hope of stamping out those vilest of human beings found to-day in the leading cities of this and other lands.

In view of the foregoing we recommend:

1. That no effort be spared in bringing to justice the so-called "pimp." When the character and prevalence of these creatures are more fully realized and public sentiment aroused regarding them, the inadequate punishment now imposed should be increased and every legitimate means devised and put into execution to exterminate them.

2. That the existing laws be more rigidly enforced to safeguard the patrons of the moving picture shows, and that parents and guardians exercise more careful supervision over their children in connection with their attendance upon these shows.

3. That vigorous efforts be made to minimize the possibility of the Raines-Law Hotel becoming a disorderly house, and that where necessary proper supervision and inspection looking toward that end be provided.

4. That the so-called massage and manicure parlors be put under the control of the Health Department; that a license from this department be required for their operation; that certificates be granted to operators only by some approved medical authority, and that proper measures be taken to enforce these laws.

5. That the laws relating to prostitution in apartment and tenement houses be rigidly enforced, and that the present laws be supplemented if necessary.

6. That a commission be appointed by the Mayor to make a careful study of the laws relating to and the methods



of dealing with the social evil in the leading cities of this country and of Europe, with a view to devising the most effective means of minimizing the evil in this city.

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR.,
Foreman.

GEO. F. CRANE, Secretary.
Dated, June 9, 1910.

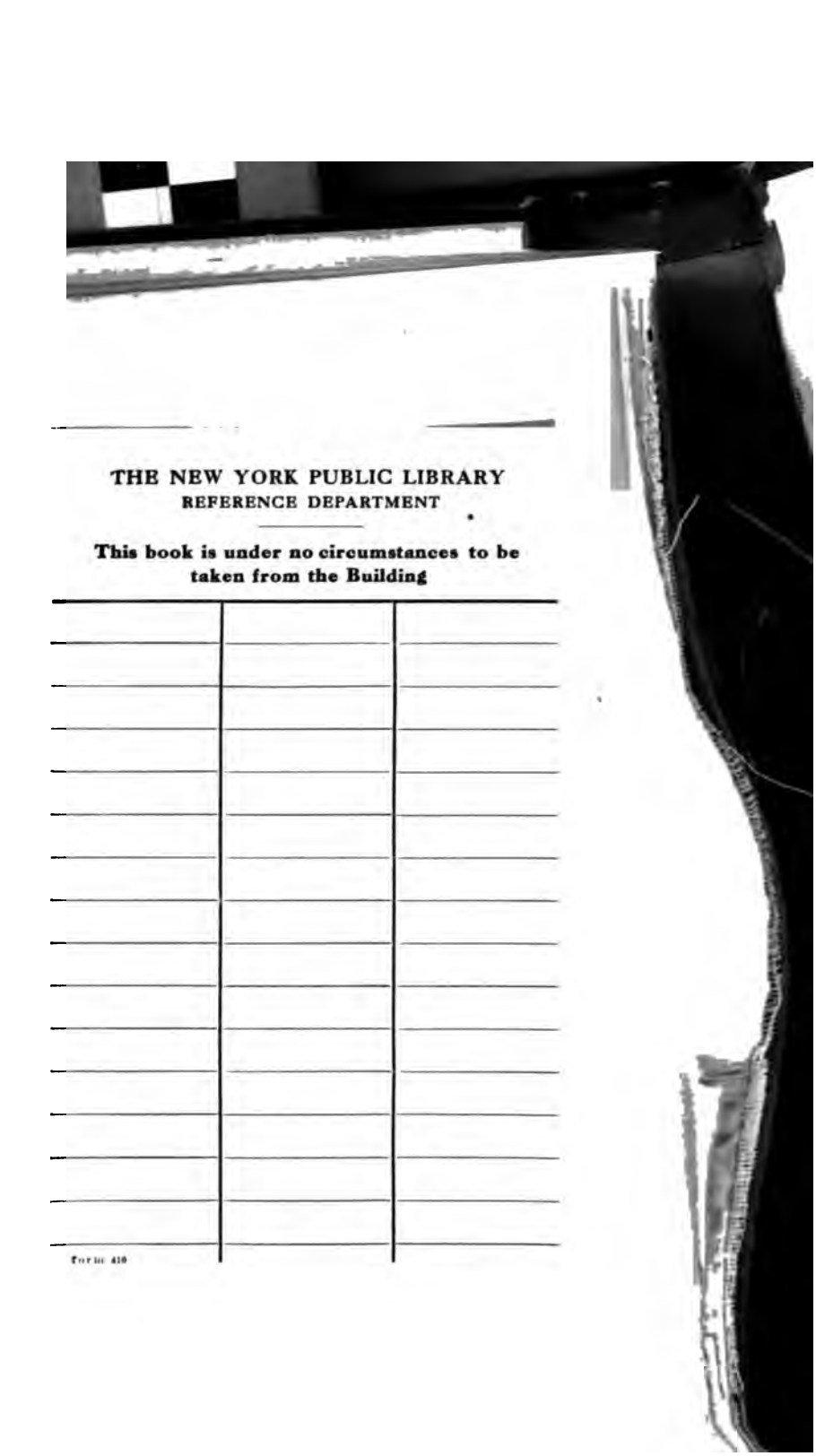












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